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"This book is a must for any business owner and their management team. TRACTION provides a powerful, practical, and simple system for running your business."

-DAN SULLIVAN

PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, THE STRATEGIC COACH

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EXPANDED EDITION

TRACTION

GET A GRIP ON YOUR BUSINESS

GINO WICKMAN

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INTRODUCTION

Humor me for a moment and mentally detach yourself from your day-to-day details. Forget all your pre-existing beliefs about how to run your organization. Now imagine a bird's-eye view of your business and look down on it from above. What do you see?

You're reading this book because you want your organization to be solid and well-run. You've already achieved a certain degree of success, and now you're ready for the next level. However, with this challenge comes a new set of obstacles; sheer will and brute force are no longer enough to survive. The question you're facing now is a new one: How can you elevate yourself to a position of true leadership?

What if I told you that by reading this book and applying its core principles, you could eliminate all of your business-related frustrations? That you could have great employees at all levels who share your vision, communicate with each other, solve their own problems, and demonstrate accountability? That your organization could not only run seamlessly, but also have the potential to scale up as large as you see fit?

I am telling you that, and you can. Believe it or not, you already have everything you need to make those changes. Put this system to work and you will accomplish all of the above, just as businesses across many different industries have been doing for years.

This book is not another silver bullet management book or flavor-of-the-month strategy. It contains no theory. It's based on real-world experience, practical wisdom, and timeless truths. More importantly, it works. Through hands-on experience, I have developed a practical but thorough method to help strengthen and reenergize your business.

If you're like most entrepreneurs, you're probably experiencing one or more of five common frustrations:

1. Lack of control: You don't have enough control over your time, the market, or your company. Instead of controlling the business, the business is controlling you.

2. People: You're frustrated with your employees, customers, vendors, or partners. They don't seem to listen, understand you, or follow through with their actions. You're not all on the same page.
3. Profit: Simply put, there's not enough of it.
4. The ceiling: Your growth has stopped. No matter what you do, you can't seem to break through and get to the next level. You feel overwhelmed and unsure of what to do next.
5. Nothing's working: You've tried various strategies and quick-fix remedies. None have worked for long, and as a result, your staff has become numb to new initiatives. You're spinning your wheels, and you need traction to move again.

Granted, a small minority of entrepreneurs and business owners do not suffer from these frustrations. They run their businesses using core disciplines that arrange the many moving parts of their organization into a well-oiled machine. Some of these owners are naturals who don't even realize they're doing anything special. Most of us, though, aren't so lucky.

What I teach business leaders is simple, but not simplistic. I help them melt away the five common frustrations by implementing the same basic tools that those successful organizations employ. As a result, business leaders come out feeling more in control, happier, and less stressed. Their organizations are more profitable, more focused, and staffed by great employees.

You are not your business. Your business is an entity in and of itself. Yes, you created it, but in order to find success, you have to turn it into a self-sustaining organism. Reaching the next level requires more than just a product or service, or a simple determination to succeed. You need skills, tools, and a system to optimize your people, processes, execution, management, and communication. You need strong guiding principles that will work for your company day in and day out.

This book contains all the tools and components that make up the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS). EOS is a holistic, self-sustaining system that addresses the six aspects of your business. Master the individual elements of EOS and

you'll be able to integrate them into a powerful framework that will help you gain traction and realize the vision you've always had for your company.

This operating system didn't hit me like a lightning bolt; I've been refining it in the real world for over 20 years. It came through countless real-world hands-on experiences one lesson at a time. My journey has been a quest to understand what makes great entrepreneurs and businesses so successful. Through turning around and then selling my own family's business, my involvement in The Entrepreneurs' Organization, and learning from my many amazing mentors, I've been blessed with many experiences, challenges, and lessons. In the last 11 years alone, I've completed more than 1,300 full-day sessions with the leadership teams of over 120 entrepreneurial organizations. That adds up to over 10,000 hours of hands-on planning, teaching, coaching, facilitating, and solving leadership problems; EOS is the culmination of all that hard work.

My typical client is an entrepreneurial small to mid-size organization (\$2 million to \$50 million in revenue with 10 to 250 employees), growth-oriented, willing to change, and willing to be vulnerable (as in being open-minded, willing to admit weaknesses, and willing to face reality). If that describes you, you're starting with everything you need. You will not have to master an endless stream of new techniques. Instead, you'll learn what successful organizations do to run a frustration-free business and gain renewed energy, focus, and excitement for your business. Join me on this journey to better control your business and bust through the ceiling—to have better balance, better results, more fun, and more profitability.

At this very moment, people who follow The EOS Process are out there running very successful businesses. On average, my clients' businesses grow revenue by 18 percent per year. In addition, unlike many theoretical authors, I too am out there somewhere, working with a leadership team hands-on and applying, testing, and proving these tools. I am an entrepreneur like you and have been since I was 21 years old. This is not management theory. EOS is working every day.

Be careful what you wish for—with this system, you'll get it. After EOS, you'll make quicker decisions to change people, strategy, systems, and processes where

necessary. It will help you reduce needless complexity, identify and remove distractions, identify and troubleshoot any problems, and keep you and your people engaged and focused on a single vision.

The Six Key Components of the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) go right to the roots of the six most important aspects of your business and strengthen them, eliminating all of your symptomatic issues by solving the real ones. EOS is a method—even a way of life—that will help you crystallize your vision and build a strong organization. By first understanding and then implementing what you learn, you will be able to accurately monitor the pulse of your company and know how it’s really doing.

At some point on this journey, you’re likely to say, as every client does, “Hey, this stuff is simple.” That’s because it is. If you’re looking for the next fashionable MBA methodology, this isn’t it. EOS consists of timeless, practical, universal principles that have been tested in almost every kind of organization. What’s dramatically new is the integration of these best practices into a complete system for organizing and operating your business that will endure for decades to come.

I have tremendous respect for you, the entrepreneur. You take risks, you drive the economy, you keep your country at the forefront of innovation, and you sacrifice everything to fulfill your dreams. As a result, you create most of the jobs and give other people the opportunities to live their dreams. My passion and purpose is to help you succeed. Now, let’s begin this journey at the end by envisioning what your company could look like after implementing EOS.

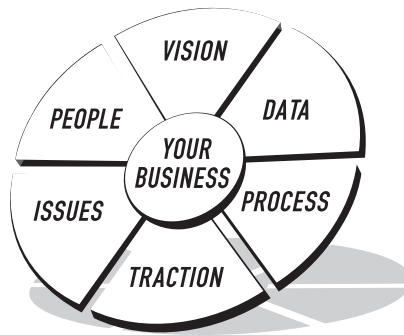
Before we begin, I’m proud to add this new final paragraph to the introduction of this expanded edition of *Traction*. With its success and five more years of real-world experiences under my belt, I’ve updated this book to include a new chapter intended to help you, the reader, implement these tools more purely. In many places, I’ve added clearly marked sidebars, which include additional teachings and new discoveries made over the last five years, and I’ve added over 50 updates throughout the book. Please enjoy this second edition of *Traction*, and if at any time you get stuck, don’t hesitate to reach out to us, as we now have a complete online support platform to help the many thousands of leaders in our community at no cost.



CHAPTER 1

**THE ENTREPRENEURIAL
OPERATING SYSTEM**

**STRENGTHENING THE SIX
KEY COMPONENTS**



Every great system is made up of a core group of basic components. The same applies to a business. The Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) identifies Six Key Components of any organization. In the words of an EOS client, “I used to worry about 100 different things. Once I learned there were six components to my business and I focused on only those, those 100 different things I’d been worrying about went away. EOS made running the business simpler.”

You’re probably worrying needlessly about a hundred different things yourself. Let’s try to remove you from some of those worries by taking a wide-angle view of your business and its components. Below are the Six Key Components of any organization.

VISION

Successful business owners not only have compelling visions for their organizations, but also know how to communicate those visions to the people around them. They get everyone in the organization seeing the same clear image of where the business is going and how it’s going to get there. It sounds easy, but it’s not.

Are your staff all rowing in the same direction? Chances are they’re not. Some are rowing to the right, some are rowing to the left, and some probably aren’t rowing at all. If you met individually with each of your employees and asked them what the company’s vision was, you’d likely get a range of different answers.

The more clearly everyone can see your vision, the likelier you are to achieve it. Focus everyone's energy toward one thing and amazing results will follow. In his book *Focus*, Al Ries illustrates the point in this way: The sun provides the earth with billions of kilowatts of energy, yet if you stand in it for an hour, the worst you will get is a little sunburn. On the other hand, a few watts of energy focused in one direction is all a laser beam needs to cut through diamonds.

In the Vision Component chapter, you will use a tool called The Vision/Traction Organizer (V/TO) to focus your people on one target and become like that laser beam. The tool simplifies strategic planning by distilling your vision into simple points that allow you to clearly define who you are as an organization, where you're going and how you'll get there. It will help you define your sweet spot as an organization and keep you focused on the areas in which you excel most. It will also define your marketing strategy and crystallize your 10-year target, three-year picture, and one-year plan. In addition, you'll learn to effectively convey your vision to your staff and ensure that it's embraced by everyone.

PEOPLE

Successful leaders surround themselves with great people. You can't build a great company without help. EOS cuts through buzzwords such as "A players," "platinum," "100 percenters," and "superstars" to provide a practical understanding of the two essential ingredients of any great team: the *right people* in the *right seats*.

Be truly honest with yourself. Are all of your people the right ones for their jobs? The reality is that some are probably hurting your cause more than helping. The People Analyzer tool in Chapter 4 will help identify the right people by teaching you how to determine who shares your core values. It will also teach you to simplify how you hire, fire, review, reward, and recognize people in your organization.

This process will prompt you to step back and look at your overall structure. You'll ask yourself hard questions about the way your business is organized. You'll also learn the power of the Accountability Chart, as well as how to structure your

company the right way while clearly defining the roles and responsibilities within your organization.

Once you have the right structure in place, you'll be able to focus on putting the right people in the right seats. There will be no gray area when you incorporate the next tool, GWC, which addresses the three absolutes for any good hire. They must *get it*, *want it*, and have the *capacity* to do it. Once you incorporate GWC into The People Analyzer, you'll have a working tool that determines which people are the right ones and which people are in the right seats.

DATA

The best leaders rely on a handful of metrics to help manage their businesses. The Data Component frees you from the quagmire of managing personalities, egos, subjective issues, emotions, and intangibles by teaching you which metrics to focus on.

My business mentor, Sam Cupp, owned several companies totaling over \$300 million in sales, including QEK Global Solutions, a worldwide fleet management company that he built into a \$100-million business and then sold. He is one of the best businessmen I've ever met. I was blessed to have him take me under his wing at a young age and teach me everything he knew. Of all of that wisdom, the most useful thing he taught me was the power of managing my business through a Scorecard.

A Scorecard is a weekly report containing five to 15 high-level numbers for the organization. In the Data Component chapter, you will learn to create and implement this powerful tool into your company. It will enable you to have a pulse of your business on a weekly basis, predict future developments, and quickly identify when things have fallen off the track. Because you're regularly reviewing the numbers, you'll be able to quickly spot and solve problems as they come up as opposed to reacting to bad numbers in a financial statement long after the fact.

A Scorecard allows you to monitor your business no matter where you are. You won't have to suffer from the uneasy feeling of not quite knowing what's going

on in your business, nor will you have to waste time asking a half dozen people for the real story. The answers will be right at your fingertips.

In addition to learning to create and implement your Scorecard, you will take your data management to the next level by learning to empower each person in your organization. Everyone will have a clear, meaningful, and manageable number that he or she is accountable for on a regular basis.

ISSUES

Issues are the obstacles that must be faced to execute your vision. Just as an individual's success is directly proportionate to his or her ability to solve any issues that arise, the same holds true for a company.

One helpful by-product of strengthening the first three EOS components is transparency. Execute them properly and you will have created an open organization where there is nowhere to hide. As a result, you will smoke out issues that have been holding you back.

The good news is that, in the history of business, there has only ever been a handful of different kinds of issues. The same ones come up over and over again. In time, you will become an expert at identifying them and knocking them down. To the degree you can identify them, discuss them honestly in a healthy environment, and learn to eradicate them, you will achieve your vision.

Regardless of how long you've been plagued by your problems, the Issues Component represents a huge opportunity. In the bustle of day-to-day operations, most companies don't invest the time required to adequately solve their issues. The irony is that by taking the time to address a problem, you will save two to 10 times that amount of time in the future.

In the Issues Component chapter, you will learn how to use the Issues List at all levels in your organization, allowing you to compartmentalize and prioritize all issues. In addition, you'll benefit by creating an open and honest culture where people feel safe to speak the truth and voice their concerns. You will then use the Issues Solving Track to eradicate these issues. This powerful tool is an efficient

way to identify, discuss, and solve your organizational issues in a lasting and meaningful way.

By the end of the Issues Component chapter, you and your staff should understand how to identify various issues, create and manage an Issues List, and master the Issues Solving Track, taking you one step closer to building a problem-solving work environment.

PROCESS

Your processes are your *Way* of doing business. Successful organizations see their *Way* clearly and constantly refine it. Due to lack of knowledge, this secret ingredient in business is the most neglected of the Six Key Components. Most entrepreneurs don't understand how powerful process can be, but when you apply it correctly, it works like magic, resulting in simplicity, scalability, efficiency, and profitability.

You will not get your company to the next level by keeping your processes in your head and winging it as you go. Ask yourself: Have you documented the way you want everything done in your organization? Do your people know what processes they are following and why? Are they all executing the required procedures uniformly? Are they skipping steps? By deciding what the process is and training everyone to follow it, you will enhance your troubleshooting abilities, reduce your errors, improve efficiency, and increase your bottom line.

In the Process Component chapter, we will identify, address, and document each of your core processes using the Three-Step Process Documenter. This tool will help you crystallize your business model by capturing the blueprint for the machine you aspire to build in a single document. From there, you will learn how to get your staff to understand the value of these processes and begin to follow them.

By the end of the journey, your processes will be clearly identified, documented, understood, and followed by everyone in your organization.

TRACTION

In the end, the most successful business leaders are the ones with traction. They execute well, and they know how to bring focus, accountability, and discipline to their organization.

Due to fear and lack of discipline, the Traction Component is typically most organizations' weakest link. The inability to make a business vision a reality is epidemic. Consider it a new take on an old quote: Vision without traction is merely hallucination. All over the world, business consultants frequently conduct multiple-day strategic planning sessions and charge tens of thousands of dollars for teaching what is theoretically great material. The downside is that after making you feel warm and fuzzy about your direction, these same consultants rarely teach how to bring your vision down to the ground and make it work in the real world.

How would you rate the accountability throughout your organization on a scale of 1 to 10? Most new clients that start The EOS Process rate their accountability somewhere around 4. Gaining traction requires two disciplines. First, everyone in the organization should have Rocks, which are clear 90-day priorities designed to keep them focused on what is most important. The second discipline requires implementing what is called a Meeting Pulse at all levels in the organization, which will keep everyone focused, aligned, and in communication.

In the Traction Component chapter, you will first learn how to set Rocks so that everyone will know what they are accountable for in the coming 90 days. Next, you'll learn how to implement a Meeting Pulse. While most people feel that meetings are a waste of time, they are necessary and useful tools. As part of the component, you'll learn how to make meetings enjoyable, productive, and worthwhile. The Level 10 Meeting Agenda is a tool that will help you get to the core of what makes for great meetings, namely conflict and resolution.

By the end of Chapter 8, everyone in your organization should know how to establish and achieve their Rocks. They'll also be engaging in effective, productive meetings using the tried and true Level 10 Meeting Agenda.

Now that we know what the Six Key Components are, we need to assess where your company is right now. The Organizational Checkup at the end of this chapter will tell you exactly where you are on this path. You can also fill out the questionnaire online at [www.eosworldwide.com /checkup](http://www.eosworldwide.com/checkup). Several of the terms won't be clear to you yet, but in a short time you'll know exactly what they mean. Fill out the questionnaire and use the attached key to get your results.

You'll be coming back to this checkup on a routine basis. The goal is to make progress every 90 days. Each time you fill out the checkup, your overall percentage should increase. It's unreasonable to think that you'll jump from 20 percent to 80 percent overnight, but you will make steady progress.

In summary, successful businesses operate with a crystal clear vision that is shared by everyone. They have the right people in the right seats. They have a pulse on their operations by watching and managing a handful of numbers on a weekly basis. They identify and solve issues promptly in an open and honest environment. They document their processes and ensure that they are followed by everyone. They establish priorities for each employee and ensure that a high level of trust, communication, and accountability exists on each team.

The Six Key Components together make up The EOS Model. Most organizations operate below 50 percent. If they succeed, it's in spite of themselves. Although it's nearly impossible to reach 100 percent in every component, achieving over 80 percent will turn your company into a well-oiled machine. All the things you've been worrying about will simply fall into place, and the common frustrations that have been plaguing you will go away.

Now that the big picture is clear, let's begin the journey. But before we dive headfirst into the nuts and bolts of the first component, you'll have to free yourself from the bad habits and unhealthy practices that are holding you back. This is called letting go of the vine.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHECKUP

For each statement below, rank your business on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is weak and 5 is strong.

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. We have a clear vision in writing that has been properly communicated and is shared by everyone in the company. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Our core values are clear, and we are hiring, reviewing, rewarding, and firing around them. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Our Core Focus™ (core business) is clear, and we keep our people, systems, and processes aligned and focused on it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Our 10-Year Target™ (big, long-range business goal) is clear, communicated regularly, and is shared by all. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Our target market (definition of our ideal customer) is clear, and all of our marketing and sales efforts are focused on it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Our 3 Uniques™ (differentiators) are clear, and all of our marketing and sales efforts communicate them. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. We have a proven process for doing business with our customers. It has been named and visually illustrated, and all of our salespeople use it. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. All of the people in our organization are the “right people” (they fit our culture and share our core values). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Our Accountability Chart™ (organizational chart that includes roles/responsibilities) is clear, complete, and constantly updated. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Everyone is in the “right seat” (they “get it, want it, and have the capacity to do their jobs well”). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

11. Our leadership team is open and honest, and demonstrates a high level of trust.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
12. Everyone has Rocks (1 to 7 priorities per quarter) and is focused on them.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
13. Everyone is engaged in regular weekly meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
14. All meetings are on the same day and at the same time each week, have the same agenda, start on time, and end on time.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
15. All teams clearly identify, discuss, and solve issues for the long-term greater good of the company.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
16. Our Core Processes are documented, simplified, and followed by all to consistently produce the results we want.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
17. We have systems for receiving regular feedback from customers and employees, so we always know their level of satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
18. A Scorecard for tracking weekly metrics/ measurables is in place.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
19. Everyone in the organization has at least one number they are accountable for keeping on track each week.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
20. We have a budget and are monitoring it regularly (e.g., monthly or quarterly).	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
Total number of each ranking	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>										
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×1	×2	×3	×4	×5							
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>							
Add all five numbers to determine the percentage score that reflects the current state of your company: <input type="checkbox"/> %.											

SCORING RESULTS

If your score falls between:

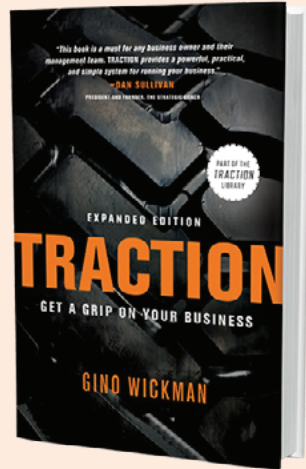
- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 20 and 34% | Please read on. This book will change your life. |
| 35 and 49% | You are normal. But would you prefer normal or great? |
| 50 and 64% | You are above average, but there is still room for improvement. |
| 65 and 79% | You are well above average. |
| 80 and 100% | This is where most EOS clients end up.
This is your goal. |

TRACTION

FOR EVERYONE

GET A GRIP ON YOUR BUSINESS

Inside Traction, you'll learn the secrets of strengthening the Six Key Components™ of your business. You'll discover simple yet powerful ways to run your company that will give you and your leadership team more focus, more growth, and more enjoyment.



Save 50% when you order 20+ copies of any combination of books

PLACE AN ORDER

About EOS Worldwide

The Entrepreneurial Operating System® (EOS) combines timeless business principles with a set of simple, practical, real-world tools to help entrepreneurs get what they want from their businesses. EOS Worldwide offers comprehensive training and support to entrepreneurs and business coaches who want to implement EOS effectively.

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“It takes not one but two entrepreneurs to build a great company. Gino and Mark show how that relationship can provide the ‘rocket fuel’ your company needs to achieve its full potential.”

—BO BURLINGHAM, Editor-at-Large, *Inc.* magazine

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ROCKET FUEL

THE ONE ESSENTIAL COMBINATION THAT WILL GET
YOU MORE OF WHAT YOU WANT FROM YOUR BUSINESS

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *TRACTION*

GINO WICKMAN AND MARK C. WINTERS

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VISIONARY—*vi·sion·ary*, *noun* \ 'vi-zhə-, ner-ē\,
First Known Use: 1702

- : one who has clear ideas about what should happen or be done in the future
- : one who has a powerful imagination
- : one who sees visions
- : one who has unusual foresight

Dreamer, Seer, Creator

INTEGRATOR—*in·te·gra·tor*, *noun* \in-tə,-grā-tər\
First Known Use: 1876

- : one who integrates
- : one who harmoniously unites the major functions of a business
- : one who keeps the trains running on time
- : one who creates focus, accountability, and alignment

Right Hand, Number Two, Steady Force

INTRODUCTION



THE DISCOVERY

This book is a how-to manual for understanding and managing the relationship between a “Visionary” and an “Integrator.” It will help you crystallize the meanings of these two roles and take your company to the next level. You will learn to utilize this partnership the right way to free yourself up, maximize your potential, and achieve everything you want from your business.

AS A VISIONARY

This is the right book for you if:

- You are an owner, founder, co-founder, or partner in a small business and you are feeling stuck, frustrated, overwhelmed, or out of control.
- You want a great second-in-command to free you up to go to the next level.

- You are not sure about looking for a president, general manager, or COO.
- You want to maximize the existing relationship with your Integrator.

AS AN INTEGRATOR

This is the right book for you if:

- You have all of the characteristics of a strong second-in-command and want to put those skills to use.
- You are sitting in the #2 seat in an organization and want to help take it to the next level.
- You are a partner to a “Visionary” type, and the relationship is strained, frustrated, or just not working right.

The message in this book is based on a discovery Gino made over 20 years ago. He applied it to a family business that he co-owned and ran for more than eight years before successfully selling the company. He has personally researched, taught, and validated this concept, working hands-on with over 125 companies and applying it directly through more than 1,500 full-day sessions with owners and leadership teams. It has been further validated by a team of dedicated EOS Implementers working with thousands of companies and by business owners in more than 10,000 companies who have read and applied the concepts outlined in two other books he has written.

It is important to note that the companies we typically work with generate revenues of \$2–\$50 million and range in size from 10 to 250 people. While this discovery also works with companies both larger and smaller than that range, this is our target market where these principles have been mainly validated.

What is the discovery Gino made? There are two distinct types of leaders in all small businesses: the “Visionary” and the “Integrator.” One sees the future, and the other makes it happen. These two roles could not be more different from each other. That is why it is magic when they work well together. Famous examples include the combination of Walt and Roy Disney at Disney, Henry Ford and James Couzens at Ford, and Ray Kroc and Fred Turner at McDonald’s. While you may think of these as large companies, they were small once. We point them out since they illustrate how vital the V/I (Visionary/Integrator) combination was in their early growth.

This book is also filled with other examples of the hundreds of thousands of unheralded small companies. While the scale is different, the two roles are still vital in building a great company. You’ll learn about real world V/I examples like Joel Pearlman and Rob Dube of imageOne (\$15 million in revenue), Randy Pruitt and David Bitel of Detroit Radiator (\$20 million), and John Pollock and Paul Boyd of Financial Gravity (\$2 million).

This discovery came about as a result of three overlapping events. They occurred in rapid succession after Gino took over running his family’s business. It was in dire need of a turnaround, and he had to act fast.

The first presented itself while he was meeting with his amazing business mentor, Sam Cupp. Sam told Gino about the type of person he called a Visionary.

The second became apparent after working closely with his dad in those first six months. Gino realized his dad was the textbook definition of a Visionary and exhibited every trait you will learn about in this book.

The third he learned from Michael E. Gerber, author of the classic book *The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It*. Gerber used the term “integrator” in a recorded workshop to define what the person at the helm of an organization does with all of its major functions.

Combining these three created a context that made sense of the troubles Gino was facing. He realized that he was an Integrator, his dad was a Visionary, and bringing together their distinct God-given abilities could be magic—if utilized correctly. However, at the time, things were chaotic. Their intentions were good, but they were working at cross-purposes as they tried to save the company.

With this clarity, Gino immediately called a meeting of the three partners where he explained the new principles. By the end of the meeting, they achieved clarity on their roles going forward. They identified his dad as the Visionary and Gino as the Integrator (their third partner assumed the role of Sales Manager). They crystallized their roles and responsibilities and went into execution mode. It worked! They quickly turned the company around. After seven years of running it in their Visionary and Integrator

roles, they returned it to growth, profitability, and sustainability. And then they successfully sold it.

Since that experience, Gino has devoted all of his working time to helping people get what they want from their businesses. The V/I dynamic is a big part of what he teaches. And to quote Danielle Kennedy, a Hall of Fame speaker with the National Speakers Association, “We teach what *we* needed the most.” This passion has continued to grow. At EOS Worldwide, we now have a team of world-class EOS Implementers working with thousands of leaders and organizations to help them achieve the results they want from their businesses.

That brings in Gino’s co-author. Mark C. Winters is one of our best EOS Implementers, with 20+ incredible years of his own entrepreneurial ventures and collaborations with other business owners. Gino feels blessed to have Mark join forces with him on this important work.

“Rocket Fuel,” the title of this book, actually came from one of Mark’s clients. In a client session that he led while we were still working on the manuscript, the client casually asked Mark, “So, what’s the title going to be for your book?” Mark shared the working title, and his Visionary client responded without hesitation, “That’s not the title . . . the title is *ROCKET FUEL!*”

Mark patiently said, “Okay, tell me more.” The client went on to explain that while bringing on his own Integrator, they were leveraging a program to review individual profiles and interaction combinations for every role in their organization. When their expert reviewed the profile patterns for this Visionary and his new Integrator, he

paused to absorb the pattern. After a brief moment, he blurted, “WOW! You guys are perfect together—you’re like ROCKET FUEL!” He was right—giving birth to the title of this book. Mark has seen firsthand how their joining forces has played a big part in taking their company to the next level.

Before we begin, it is important to understand that this discovery has at its core a philosophical belief. All human beings have a God-given set of capabilities—what Dan Sullivan would call “Unique Ability^{®*}.” Or in other words, a true skill-set or genetic makeup. The premise is that all people have one. A Visionary is meant to be a Visionary, and an Integrator is meant to be an Integrator. You are either one or the other, rarely both. One University of California professor asserts the need for both an entrepreneur and a manager at the top of a company. An entrepreneur’s lust needs to be counterbalanced with a manager’s prudence and discipline. He is making the same point that we do with the V/I relationship, simply using different terminology. When it’s structured correctly, the dynamic that exists between these two distinct leadership gifts can be magical.

We will cover everything including what the relationship should look like, how to find each other, how to work together most effectively, and how to maximize and constantly improve the relationship.

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The road ahead will not only help you crystallize how to find, form, and manage the relationship between a Visionary and Integrator, it will help you solve the tension and frustration that inevitably accompany this dynamic relationship of two people who are wired so differently from each other.

We invite you on this journey to discover which one you are—and free yourself to embrace it. That is our ultimate message. Figure out which one you are, assume that role, and excel!

We take great pride in sharing this message with you. We have the privilege of spending every day teaching business leaders. We witness the beneficial results achieved by defining and clarifying these two vital roles. With them, companies gain faster growth, more peace of mind, more freedom, higher profitability, more fun, and considerably increased cohesiveness. We have the great fortune to help liberate Visionaries from the shackles of the day-to-day details. We unleash their creativity to grow their organizations and capitalize on industry trends. Integrators find validation of their unique talent, grabbing the reins of a company day-to-day and creating organizational clarity, accountability, focus, and harmony.


What we are about to share is a science. It's real. It's powerful. When harnessed, it is very effective. It may be your way to finally break through the ceiling that's been hanging over you for so long.

PART ONE



THE CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1



THE VISIONARY

Are you a Visionary? Has anyone ever called you that? Maybe they see something in you that you don't fully recognize about yourself—at least not yet. Or perhaps it's something you've always known.

If you are a Visionary, you are one of only 3% of the population that create two-thirds of the new jobs in our economy. (This figure comes from John F. Dini, in his book *Hunting in a Farmers World: Celebrating the Mind of an Entrepreneur*.)

The concept of the Visionary within an organization is one of the great breakthroughs experienced by our clients. We've even had them go on to teach this concept to MBA students at universities on our behalf. Understanding and implementing this concept is both eye-opening and empowering. Frankly, it has also kept some partners from killing each other. Let's explore what life looks like for a Visionary.

HERE'S WHAT VISIONARIES BRING TO AN ORGANIZATION

To start, you should realize that the following characteristics are typical attributes. No Visionary has 100% of them. A good rule of thumb is that if you match up on 80% of the traits outlined in this section, you are a Visionary.

As a Visionary you are extremely passionate about your product, service, company, and customers. When you look up “passion” in the dictionary, your picture is there. You are very entrepreneurial, a creator, and likely a founder of your firm. Most often we see *external* titles like Owner, Founder, CEO, Chairman, or President on your business card. Yet we strongly believe that *internally* referring to roles more by what people do (e.g., Visionary or Integrator) creates clarity and does a much better job than traditional corporate titles of capturing the true contribution of each person within an organization.

The Idea Generator. As a Visionary, you have lots of ideas. You typically have ten new ideas a week. Many of them may not be so good, or at least not a fit with the company's primary focus. Some may even be dangerous. However, a few are absolutely brilliant. And those few great ideas keep the organization growing. Those great ideas can take companies to the moon. For this reason, you are invaluable.

Rob Dube, the Integrator and co-owner of imageOne, a \$15 million company providing managed print services and workflow solutions, reflects on his partner and Visionary Joel Pearlman's history. Joel's “big idea” of joining a purchasing group led to considerably better margins

and product knowledge. He then advocated selling the company and later buying it back. His vision to define the company's 10-year target of \$60 million in revenue and \$6 million in profit inspired the entire company. (Incidentally, they are on track to hit that target.) In addition, he found and closed a huge customer that represents 10% of total company revenue. Rob says, "I certainly have had to filter a lot of Joel's ideas, but none of these things would have happened if Joel were not here."

As a Visionary, you are very creative. You're great at devising solutions to big problems, not the little practical ones. You are a learner. You enjoy discovering new ideas, learning about them, and figuring out how they can work for the company. When you hit a roadblock, you study to find the answers. You teach visually, drawing diagrams on whiteboards, flip charts, yellow legal pads, napkins, or whatever happens to be within reach. A key value you bring as a Visionary is this ability to discover and figure out new ways to make things work.

"Innovators [Visionaries] find, in their lives and work, something disharmonious that common sense overlooks or denies." This quote comes from the book *The Innovator's Way*, where authors Denning and Dunham reference the book *Disclosing New Worlds* to describe this first step Visionaries take in the process of innovation.

The Big Picture. You are fantastic with important clients, vendors, suppliers, and financial relationships—the big external relationships. And you excel at closing big deals. You are really best at the high-level stuff: big ideas and solving big problems. The smaller and more detailed things become, the less they interest you. Sound familiar?

Seeing the Future. As a Visionary, you are great with Research and Development (more “R” than “D”) for new products and services. You always have a pulse on the market/industry—and even the future needs of clients. You think strategically, always seeing the whole picture and connecting the dots. You see things that others can’t. This positions you perfectly to create and champion the company vision. You help the rest of the team understand what’s going to be necessary to stay ahead. You are great at turning your best ideas about the future into a vision—as long as you don’t have to implement any of those plans. Your vision is so strong, you are convinced the company can get there. Although you don’t yet know exactly how, that does not lessen your conviction.

Todd Sachse, the Visionary of Sachse Construction, a \$120 million general contractor, made a bold move in 2009 as the great recession descended. He decided to buck the trend of the industry and not downsize in the shrinking market. He believed that the recession would not last forever, so he viewed this as an opportunity to achieve two objectives. He wanted to hire new talent that wouldn’t otherwise be available. Plus, he wanted to maintain the vast majority of his staff for when the recession ended. This positioned the company to capitalize on opportunities that other companies couldn’t pursue because of their extreme downsizing. As a result, Sachse Construction grew 200% during and coming out of the great recession. During that same time, many other general contractors went out of business or shrank to less than half their previous size.

Because of all these amazing gifts, Visionaries are the creators of almost everything. Very little exists on our

planet without the Visionaries of the world. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, you are the 3% of the population that creates two-thirds of the new jobs.

A Hunter Mentality. In John F. Dini's book, he calls you "Hunters," meaning that you are wired differently than most. You are always in "hunting" mode. Your type of hunting is for ideas, deals, opportunities, and solutions to big problems. Dini describes you as having "the ability to navigate in the fog," explaining you know "how to keep moving in the right direction when you don't have a compass and there aren't any signposts." He says, "Entrepreneurs [Visionaries] hunt. They don't manage. They explore rather than analyze. They build companies with vision, creativity, and tenacity; not with policies and procedures."

If most or all of what you just read describes you, you are a Visionary. Know thyself and be free!

THE VISIONARY ROLE: HERE'S WHAT YOU DO

The role of the Visionary in an organization is ultimately tailored to their specific Unique Ability®. The most common roles we see the Visionary playing are as follows:

- Entrepreneurial "spark plug"
- Inspirer
- Passion provider
- Developer of new/big ideas/breakthroughs
- Big problem solver

- Engager and maintainer of big external relationships
- Closer of big deals
- Learner, researcher, and discoverer
- Company vision creator and champion

THE VISIONARY DNA: HERE'S WHAT YOU ARE

Our experience also shows a very consistent pattern of traits that are common to a true Visionary. They typically:

- Are the founding entrepreneur.
- Have lots of ideas/idea creation/growth ideas.
- Are strategic thinkers.
- Always see the big picture.
- Have a pulse on the industry and target market.
- Research and develop new products and services.
- Manage big external relationships (e.g., customer, vendor, industry).
- Get involved with customers and employees when vision is needed.
- Inspire people.
- Are creative problem solvers (big problems).
- Create the company vision and protect it.
- Sell and close big deals.
- Connect the dots.
- On occasion do the work, provide the service, make the product.

THE VISIONARY CHALLENGES: HERE'S WHAT YOU AREN'T

Assuming that you now understand these wonderful traits, you might be thinking that Visionaries (perhaps you) are practically superhuman. Right?

Well, like most things in nature—with special gifts come special challenges. So, let's see what special challenges a uniquely gifted Visionary faces. Once again, a good rule of thumb is that if you possess 80% or more of the characteristics discussed in this chapter, you are a Visionary. Actually, you may be quite capable of doing many of the things that follow—you just don't enjoy them enough to keep up with them over time.

Staying Focused. For one, you get bored easily. As a result, you start creating a little chaos, just to spice things up a bit. That pattern shows up even more whenever you step into the Integrator role. Everybody gets excited about your new idea or direction. The organization has this wonderful 90-day spike in performance. Then, unfortunately, everything tends to come crashing down in a heap. And that's because the Visionary in you got bored with the day-to-day redundancy of running the business, literally self-sabotaging your own vision.

One Visionary confessed, "I get bored pretty easily, and my work energy ebbs at times." Another said, "My biggest challenge is boredom. When I find extra capacity and time I tend to meddle, filling this time by getting involved in other people's accountabilities." Yet another said, "I struggle with maintaining focus and following through." You start many different projects at once, while only a few get completed.

Too Many Ideas. Your people love your Visionary learning capability. As a lifetime learner you always need to be figuring stuff out—which you do by doing, in a very hands-on interactive way. This practice, however, can be rather disruptive. You love “breaking the mold” and pursuing the shiny stuff that really doesn’t fit with the company’s Core Focus. You have little empathy for the negative impact this has on capacity, resources, people, and profitability. As a result, your new idea can actually sabotage your best idea. This may be your Achilles’ heel as a Visionary.

Marc Schechter, Visionary and co-owner of Schechter Wealth, a premier investment advisory and advanced life insurance design firm with 40 teammates, stated, “My ever-growing wish list is always bigger than our resources are capable of tackling; it is a challenge for me to conclude with my team which ideas not to act on. I’m also challenged with my new ideas because without proper resources, they will take me away from responsibilities I have in executing the existing plan.” Another Visionary, when asked what their biggest challenges are, simply said: “Too many ideas.” And another said, “I’m always trying to get 100 pounds of sh*t into a 50-pound bag.”

In his book *The Hypomanic Edge: The Link Between (a Little) Crazy and (a Lot of) Success in America*, John D. Gartner imparts an interesting theory about Visionaries: part of their M.O. could be considered a form of mania. Gartner practices psychotherapy and is an associate professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. His powerful and enlightening book shows that many of the great Visionaries in the past may have

been hypomanic. Gartner describes hypomania as a mild form of mania that endows a person with unusual energy, creativity, enthusiasm, and a propensity for taking risks. One notable hypomanic case referenced by Gartner is Andrew Carnegie, who built the American steel industry.

Gartner explains that the reason there are so many entrepreneurs (Visionaries) in America is that most of us are immigrants. It lies in our genes because of our forebears who had the will, optimism, and daring to leave their countries for the “promised land.”

Dan Sullivan, the creator of The Strategic Coach program, which has coached over 15,000 entrepreneurs, describes the phenomenon this way: “Entrepreneurs have an unrealistic optimism. It’s chemical in the brain. They see things others can’t.” Along the same lines, Steve Jobs of Apple was once described as having a “reality distortion field.”

Whiplash. Another trait we see often is what we refer to as “organizational whiplash.” In this case, the organization is so tuned in to the Visionary and your ideas that whenever you turn your head to the right to pursue a new idea, it forces the whole organization to the right. Then, following your natural Visionary instincts, you turn your head in the other direction, toward another idea—and WHIP! The organization tries to snap to the new direction, but it can’t keep up with the pace of the head turns. Eventually, they lose all sense of where they are headed. We can’t really hold the Visionary at fault for this one. You likely aren’t even aware that it’s happening—until the damage has been done. This leads to another dynamic that ails many organizations—a lack of consistency.

Along these same lines, we commonly see a sort of binary behavior where you are either all in on something, or out entirely . . . and it changes back and forth—a lot. This effect is similar to someone playing with a light switch: ON-OFF-ON-OFF-ON . . . All of this can create chaos for an organization. Surprised? Or does this sound familiar?

In many cases this indicates some level of ADD. This is actually a gift because it provokes so many ideas. However, on the negative side, you are unable to pay attention to someone speaking to you unless they make their point in under 30 seconds. They don't feel like you care enough to listen. And they may even experience *more* difficulty speaking with you once they anticipate you shutting them down when they can't get their point across quickly enough. You jump from topic to topic, without a segue, making it hard for people to follow you. You think they surely have caught your point, while they may not feel comfortable stopping you to clarify—which they may well need to do a lot. Miscommunication runs rampant. You are frustrated—and so are they.

Sweating the Details. You aren't good at managing and holding people accountable, typically don't like details, don't like running the day-to-day of the business on a long-term basis, and aren't good at following through.

Clearly articulating the details of your vision to others can be quite a challenge. And having to repeat it often wears you out. A great example of how this communication problem is created appears in the book *Made to Stick*, by Chip and Dan Heath. The brothers describe a study that was done at Stanford University. Two students

would sit face-to-face. One would be given a list of 25 well-known songs and instructed to pick one and tap out the rhythm on the table for the other, who was supposed to guess the tune. Out of 120 tapped songs, the listeners guessed only three right. This illustrates an amazing point. The person tapping out “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” hears every note perfectly in his head. He is surprised to find out that it’s only guessed right 2.5% of the time. He does not realize the listener is only hearing monotonous thumps on the table.

As a Visionary, you have a crystal-clear picture in your mind of what you want. It’s in vivid color. When you explain it, you hear the sweet sound of music. Unfortunately, much of the time it comes across to others listening as simply “thump, thump, thump.” This comes from *under*-communicating your vision. The same ability that allows you to create a vision is inextricably attached to your lack of ability to communicate it well.

Developing Talent. In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins describes one common leadership behavior pattern as “a genius with a thousand helpers.” Many Visionaries suffer from this problem. You are very bright, and likely made it this far largely on your own capabilities—expanding the company from startup to where you are today on your own brute strength. However, what got you here won’t get you to the next level. You haven’t really needed to leverage the capabilities of others, so it isn’t surprising that you’ve spent little time thinking about how to develop such resources. It is exceedingly difficult for you to attract the type of leadership that could eventually run the day-to-day without you. As an entrepreneur you don’t like

being told what to do. Your gift is actually telling other people what to do. So, you naturally order your young, high-potential, talented leaders around—and end up running them off instead of developing them.

You may even see your company as a platform from which you can display your brilliance to the world. You are a rock star, and this is your stage. Your company is your identity. This view leaves little space for talent to develop around you.

You are a competitor. While you see this trait positively, being driven to succeed in whatever you undertake, others see a very different side of you. That side makes it very difficult to build a healthy team. When you are aggressive in meetings, it makes you difficult to challenge. When frustrated, you may take a tone of condescension and appear dismissive of those who fall short of your expectations. This behavior can easily discourage healthy debate. It may even encourage the type of sycophants that blind your organization to facing the true issues your team must address in order to grow. Open and honest? Not so much. The team will progressively make fewer and fewer decisions. Why should they risk the chance of being wrong and incurring your wrath? Plus, they know their “genius” is going to make the call anyway.

In an extreme case, one unnamed client complained that her people all knew her “look.” Each one had felt the daggers that shot from their leader’s eyes whenever they had voiced an opinion that did not closely match her own. A telltale pursing of her lips was immediately followed by an explosion of heated words outlining the stupidity of their comments. The team learned fast, and didn’t fall into

that trap more than once. They watched new employees naively walk into their own bloody ambush—it was like some cruel form of initiation. Eventually, each member of the team learned to be a good parrot—following the rules and sitting alertly at the table. Meanwhile, she could never understand why she felt so alone on this ship of hers. She lamented that she had no one else on her team as capable as she was. All the time, of course, they simply bit their tongues because they were too afraid to speak up.

Also in *Good to Great*, Jim Collins describes a clear example of a “Rugged Individualist.” In the 1960s and 1970s, a classic genius named Henry Singleton built Teledyne from an obscure little company to reach #293 on the Fortune 500 list—in just six years. Growing through aggressive acquisitions, his empire expanded to include 130 different profit centers—ranging from insurance to exotic metals. Henry was the octopus in the middle of it all—holding it together. Incredibly, he was able to do it. When he was 72, he stepped away from day-to-day management duties. He had never given much thought to succession. In less than ten years following his departure, Teledyne’s cumulative stock returns unwound—trailing the general stock market by 66%. Was he a success for achieving such heights? Or a failure for not building a great company to last after his departure?

THE VISIONARY DNA: COMMON CHALLENGES

Our experience shows us there is an obvious pattern in the aforementioned Visionary traits that tends to contribute

to some of their biggest challenges. Those challenges are as follows:

- Inconsistency
- Organizational “whiplash,” the head turn
- Dysfunctional team, a lack of openness and honesty
- Lack of clear direction/under-communication
- Reluctance to let go
- Underdeveloped leaders and managers
- “Genius with a thousand helpers”
- Ego and feelings of value dependent on being needed by others
- Eyes (appetite) bigger than stomach; 100 pounds forced into a 50-pound bag
- Resistance to following standardized processes
- Quickly and easily bored
- No patience for the details
- Amplification of complexity and chaos
- ADD (typical, not always)
- All foot on gas pedal—with no brake
- Drive is too hard for most people

WHAT'S GETTING IN THE WAY?

If you think that you have these unique Visionary talents and aren't sure how to fully maximize them, welcome to the crowd. A lack of Visionary self-awareness is a

common pattern. We often see this in working with hundreds of real-life Visionaries. Why didn't they initially see themselves as a true Visionary, or maximize this potential? Three reasons most frequently appear:

1. Role Awareness. You aren't aware that a stand-alone Visionary role exists in an organization. This problem is common in companies that have started from scratch. You have just done everything that was needed—until everything became too much.

Brandon Stallard, for instance, always followed his instincts in business. He built his business, TPS Logistics, from startup to 85 people by following his gut. About 12 years after startup, he learned about the Visionary role. He realized that he was the textbook definition of one, and he was overjoyed that he could spend all of his working time in the role. He clarified the role in his organization and hasn't looked back. Fitting into the role was bumpy at first, and letting go of the day-to-day reins to his Integrator took some practice. Yet his assuming the Visionary role has taken the company to a new level.

2. Ability Awareness. You aren't fully aware of your own natural gifts as a Visionary. Building a company is hard work. You put your nose to the grindstone to make sure the business kept growing. Unfortunately, always just rolling up your sleeves never clarified or helped you see your true genetic encoding.

Matt Rossetti of ROSSETTI, a world-class architectural firm with over 70 employees, always did what came naturally to him. He knew his tendencies were unusual compared to most. He always had the ability to see the

big picture, come up with great creative solutions to big problems, and inspire his team.

Says Matt, “I never realized I was a Visionary. It came slowly and gradually to me, almost as a result of finding out what I don’t do well. Once I realized I was a Visionary (others saw it long before I did), I was enormously motivated and freed to really grow and be courageous in the role . . . which it requires! I began to turn everything that wasn’t for a Visionary over to our Integrator. We have taken the company to another level!”

Still, Matt was reluctant “about being anointed as Visionary.” As he said, “It is such a sacred role. While some jump right into it, others might be more reluctant and need to be pushed in that direction. I’ll bet many good potential Visionaries miss out on the value of the role because of that.”

3. Letting Go. Your need for control, or a lack of trust, is keeping you from letting go enough to embrace the Visionary role. Like many entrepreneurs, you may be good at multiple roles. You know how to run the company—because you’ve always had to. What happens, though, when your hands aren’t big enough to hang on to it all? Of course letting go requires trust. The tools and rules we will teach you in this book will enable you to develop that trust with your Integrator. In turn, you’ll be confident that things won’t come crashing down when you finally do let go.

One Visionary (who will remain unnamed) runs a very successful company. On the outside he seems to be fine. He has won all sorts of awards and accolades. Inside

the company, however, things are chaotic. The organization is marked by a lack of accountability and consistency. His people are tired from all the fits and starts, and he is burning out. He knows something has to give, but he fears relinquishing the day-to-day control to someone else. As a result he's carrying the entire load. This state of affairs can't last forever, but as long as it does, the company is going to be filled with internal chaos.

Regardless of which of the abovementioned reasons you might be facing for not fully embracing your role as Visionary, you will find solutions in this book.

YOU ARE HERE

So, there you are, our hero the Visionary—all alone at the helm of your business. You are frustrated, you are doing everything, and you're burning out. You're suffering from what we call the Five Frustrations:

1. **Lack of Control.** You started this business so you could have more control over your time, money, and freedom—your future. Once you reach a certain point of growth, however, you realize that somehow you actually have *less* control over these things than you've ever had before. The business is now controlling you!
2. **Lack of Profit.** Quite simply, you don't have enough. It's a frustrating feeling to look at the monthly P&L (or daily cash flow) and realize that no matter how hard you work, the numbers just don't add up.

3. **People.** Nobody (employees, partners, vendors) seems to understand you or do things your way. You're just not on the same page.
4. **Hitting the Ceiling.** Growth has stopped. The business is more complex, and you can't figure out exactly why it isn't working.
5. **Nothing Is Working.** You've tried several remedies, consulted books, and instituted quick fixes. None of these have worked for long. Your employees have become numb to new initiatives. Your wheels are spinning—and you have no traction.

To compound the difficulties, you are now bored with the repetition of day-to-day execution. Your company has outgrown the stage where force of will could solve almost any challenge. You feel like you're coaxing a cat to swim across a pond—it's just not a natural thing for a Visionary. It's time to seriously address the company's structure, people, and process. So now what?

THE SOLUTION: EMBRACE YOUR VISIONARY NATURE

Not all Visionary entrepreneurs are frustrated. Many have engineered significant growth, feel in control, have enviable profits, and employ people who work together as a team. Instead of the endless issues that cause the minor distractions so common to many companies, these Visionaries run businesses that are focused, consistent,

and healthy. You can get everything you want from your business. If you are willing to do what it takes to be your best, there is hope.

If you are a Visionary, you must delegate the role of implementing your ideas in order to elevate yourself to your true talents. This will free up your energy and creativity to grow your company, protect your vision, wow your customers, protect your culture, and stay three steps ahead of everyone—including the competition.

At Uckele Health and Nutrition (UHN), Visionary Mike Uckele decided to hire an Integrator. This was six years after taking over ownership of the family business from his father and uncle. He had doubled the size of the company over that period, playing both roles. He knew he was not good at executing the details, but wanted to wait until he could afford to hire an executive. Four years ago he named Del Collins as Integrator, and UHN has grown 20% per year to \$23 million and 108 people. Del was promoted from within after two years of working for the company. Mike describes the results of the decision as “Very rewarding. It allows me to no longer burn the candle at both ends and worry about everything getting completed. I spend more time with family and friends, and focus solely on growing the business.” He describes his role as “the facilitator of creative ideas and relationship builder.”

As the old proverb so accurately notes, “Vision without execution is just hallucination.” In other words, you need someone to help you execute your vision. The idea isn’t enough: it must be implemented to have value. It’s your

choice. For those of you who are searching for answers, let's get to work.

Tens of thousands of Visionaries have been where you are now. Some have failed, but many have gone to the next level. They just didn't do it alone. You will now have to decide. Are you willing to delegate and elevate?

After all, Ray Kroc couldn't have done it without Fred Turner at McDonald's. Henry Ford couldn't have done it without James Couzens at Ford. Joel Pearlman couldn't have done it without Rob Dube at imageOne. John Pollock couldn't have done it without Paul Boyd at Financial Gravity.

Now you see the landscape for the Visionary. The powers and the pitfalls. All of these Visionaries stood where you are standing right now, and they made a choice. In the words of Randy Pruitt, Visionary of Randall Industries, one of the largest radiator manufacturing and distribution companies in North America, "If you are looking to grow your company, you can't do it without an Integrator. At some point you will have to relieve the weight carried on your shoulders and find someone to carry it with you."

The Visionary DNA

Common Roles	Common Traits	Common Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurial "spark plug" • Inspirer • Passion provider • Developer of new/big ideas/breakthroughs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the founding entrepreneur • Have lots of ideas/idea creation/idea growth • Are strategic thinkers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistency • Organizational "whiplash," the head turn • Dysfunctional team, a lack of openness and honesty

The Visionary DNA (continued)

Common Roles	Common Traits	Common Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big problem solver • Engager and maintainer of big external relationships • Closer of big deals • Learner, researcher, and discoverer • Company vision creator and champion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always see the big picture • Have a pulse on the industry and target market • Research and develop new products and services • Manage big external relationships (e.g., customer, vendor, industry) • Get involved with customers and employees when Visionary is needed • Inspire people • Are creative problem solvers (big problems) • Create the company vision and protect it • Sell and close big deals • Connect the dots • On occasion do the work, provide the service, make the product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear direction/under-communication • Reluctance to let go • Underdeveloped leaders and managers • “Genius with a thousand helpers” • Ego and feelings of value dependent on being needed by others • Eyes (appetite) bigger than stomach; 100 pounds in a 50-pound bag • Resistance to following standardized processes • Quickly and easily bored • No patience for the details • Amplification of complexity and chaos • ADD (typical; not always) • All foot on gas pedal—with no brake • Drive is too hard for most people

Before we discuss the Integrator role, please take the assessment below to see if you are truly a Visionary. Also consider having your Leadership Team complete it on your behalf. The Visionary Indicator Assessment is also available online at www.rocketfuelnow.com.

VISIONARY INDICATOR ASSESSMENT						
For each statement below, rank yourself on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 rarely describes you and 5 almost always describes you:						
1	I have an affinity for tackling and creatively solving the biggest, most complex problems.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am constantly generating new ideas. I never run out.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am a great leader. People tend to follow me.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am highly optimistic in my outlook.	1	2	3	4	5
5	My natural perspective is oriented toward things that are external to the company, big-picture or futuristic thinking.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am the creator of, and champion for, the company Vision.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I sometimes find it difficult to translate my Vision into something that others understand. They don't seem to get it.	1	2	3	4	5

8	I eventually have the “right” idea, and know it. It may come from having a large volume of different ideas or a small number that I feel strongly about.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have zero patience for putting operational policy, structure, and repeatability systems in place.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I naturally think about the future of the industry, our product or our service, what’s coming, and how we can best position the company to take advantage of it.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I am naturally insightful, skilled at deductive reasoning, and highly innovative in thinking of ways to make ideas bigger and better.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I don’t like being held accountable or being told what to do. I find it challenging to establish genuine accountability in my company.	1	2	3	4	5
13	I embrace and enjoy the role of being the engine for big, new, breakthrough ideas, the spark, getting them started.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I embrace and enjoy the role of solving the biggest problems faced by the company.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I embrace and enjoy the role of being responsible for a few large, key, strategic relationships (vendor, client, banking, industry).	1	2	3	4	5

(Continued on next page)

16	I embrace and enjoy the role of selling and closing big deals.	1	2	3	4	5
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17	I struggle with follow-through. I lose interest in finishing new ideas. I don't have patience or interest for a lot of detail. I wish people would get to the point. I get bored and distracted very easily.	1	2	3	4	5
----	--	---	---	---	---	---

18	I embrace and enjoy the role of being the "entrepreneurial spark plug," providing passion and inspiration.	1	2	3	4	5
----	--	---	---	---	---	---

19	I embrace and enjoy the role of researching and developing new products and services.	1	2	3	4	5
----	---	---	---	---	---	---

20	I embrace and enjoy the role of leading the way on learning and discovery that advances the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
----	---	---	---	---	---	---

COUNT: Total number of each ranking

x1 x2 x3 x4 x5

TOTAL: Multiply by number above

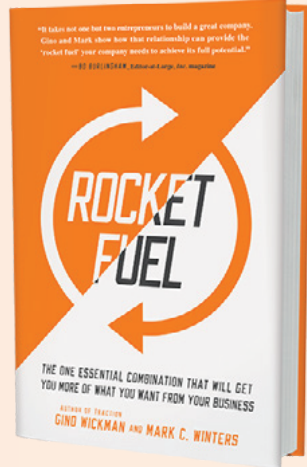
Add all five numbers from the TOTAL line above to determine your **Visionary Indicator Score**: _____ (A VIS of 80 or more is considered strong.)

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INTRODUCTION

THIS IS A BUSINESS FABLE, but it's not like any business fable you've read before. Though fictional, *Get A Grip* is a gritty, real-world story about an entrepreneurial company that has hit the ceiling. Tired and frustrated, its leaders respond by implementing a practical, proven system that dramatically improves the performance of their business and the quality of their lives.

That system is called EOS, the Entrepreneurial Operating System. It's not theory. It's not full of abstract concepts. It's not about one big idea. Rather, it's a complete system full of simple, practical tools that has helped thousands of entrepreneurs worldwide get what they want from their businesses.

We've personally taken hundreds of companies through this process. If the details ring true it's because we really didn't make up anything. Any similarities to issues you face with your organization, leadership team, or people are pure coincidence. This book isn't based on a true story; it's actually based on hundreds of true stories. There isn't one situation you will read about that we haven't experienced at least twenty times with various clients.

We hope these realistic characters and familiar situations help you see how to solve the most important and common issues you face as a leader. These practical tools will help you simplify, clarify, and achieve your vision. We're confident they will because—over and over again—we've seen that the results of implementing EOS are

truly remarkable. But don't take our word for it. We'll let the business owners who've implemented it speak for themselves:

“In the ten years prior to implementing EOS, our company experienced substantial and consistent revenue growth year after year. But we hit a ceiling. Our leaders weren't on the same page, there was confusion about direction and roles, finger pointing, and turf protecting—profit dropped considerably. It wasn't fun. EOS has helped us develop a trusting, engaged, focused, and empowered leadership team. We're growing again, expanding our facilities, acquiring companies, and delivering more consistently to our customers. Best of all, we've been profitable, even through the tough years, and I am able to truly strategize our long-term path instead of concentrating on present-day issues. On a one-to-ten scale, I give the whole experience a ten (and I don't give many tens).”

JOE CEKOLA

President, Imperial Beverage

“Prior to beginning our EOS journey, issues small and large often got in the way of our growth. Implementing EOS has helped us see these issues and resolve them. We now have a phenomenal (and very clear) vision for our firm, the right structure to take us to the next level, and are hiring strategically based on our Core Values so that we have the right people in the right seats. We've grown 25 percent or more in each of the last three years and, perhaps more importantly, are enjoying the ride. We look forward to working hard with a great team, but are increasingly able to disengage at the end of the day and spend quality time with our families. It doesn't get much better.”

DAVE KOLB

CEO, Global Tax Network

“After twenty-seven years of business, a downturn in the economy, and a new management team, adopting EOS was exactly what we needed at Brogan & Partners. Through the process, we have expedited our decision making, enabling us to get far more done in a shorter period of time. Simply, the process has helped us make the

hard decisions that are right for our business. Not only has EOS helped us uncover our true culture, it has helped our company live by those values. Brogan & Partners is stronger, the management team is more accountable, and we are seeing the results with an influx of new clients, more income, and a better bottom line.”

ELLYN DAVIDSON

Managing Partner, Brogan & Partners

“Five years ago we ended the year at \$5 million in revenue and a 3 percent net loss. Things weren’t awful, but we definitely wanted to do better, so we implemented EOS. It felt a little awkward at first, but as we began to master the system, things became simpler and everything began to work better. As a result, we ended the next year at \$7,500,000 with a 6 percent net profit! The whole leadership team is so much more confident about the future now, and we’ve never been so unified as a team. I guess the big ‘WOW!’ in all of this is knowing that our dreams are attainable. We’re on pace to close out this year at \$18 million with a nice profit. EOS works.”

STEVE SPIECH

Spiech Farms

“Though growing quickly, profitable, and entirely self-funded after three years in business, my partner and I realized things weren’t perfect. We had a murky vision, plenty of stress, and a strained partnership. Implementing EOS changed all that. For the first time we had clarity and accountability. We began managing our growth in a way that wouldn’t cost us our friendship or financial stability. Two short years after seriously doubting the future of our business, it is stronger and growing faster than ever. The results speak for themselves. Sales have grown from \$2.2 million to more than \$7 million in two short years, and we are #258 on the Inc. 500. Best of all, we run a stable, profitable business and we’re still having fun.”

ANDREW DUNEMAN

Owner, Bulk Reef Supply

“Dietz Property Group (DPG) has been implementing EOS for just over two years coming out of the Great Recession. During this

period, we grew 44 percent by picking up six new third-party engagements and acquiring three new properties—after being stagnant for a couple of years. EOS has also helped position us for future growth. We are a much stronger, clearer, simpler, more cohesive organization than before we started with EOS.”

BRIAN DIETZ

President, Dietz Property Group

“Lowry Computer Products is celebrating our one-year anniversary of being engaged in the EOS process and have committed to the process for our future. The process has helped us solidify our vision and streamlined the execution of our vision. As a result, our company has accomplished major milestones in propelling growth and employee satisfaction, and reaching all of our goals successfully. We grew three times the rate of our industry average this year.”

MIKE LOWRY

President/CEO, Lowry Computer Products

“Our business had enjoyed sixty-plus years of success prior to implementing EOS with a ‘shoot from the hip’ way of doing business. As we grew, however, that approach created inconsistency and inefficiencies as each of our locations developed their own way of doing things and each became like separate businesses. We realized that would make it very difficult for us to continue growing profitably. EOS has given us the structure, discipline, and accountability to get everyone in the organization on the same page and working hard to achieve a common vision. We waste less time, identify and resolve issues as a healthy, cohesive team, and we get more done.”

TOM BOHLS

Vice President, Buckeye Power Sales

“EOS was the catalyst for one of the most remarkable changes in my company. My leadership team has integrated the EOS tools into our everyday work habits. Our vision is clear, and strategies are well-executed and communicated to all. EOS taught my leadership team how to plan, act, and communicate in a system that is easy for all to adopt and follow. Within the first year of

integrating EOS, my company was able to achieve a record revenue growth of 87 percent over the prior year.”

RANDY PRUITT

President, Randall Industries, Inc.

Get A Grip is not designed to just give you something to think about. It's thorough enough to help you and your leadership team fully implement the tools described in this fable and achieve results like those of the companies above. We could have written this book as a straightforward description of EOS (in fact, its companion book, *Traction*, does exactly that). But we believe that for many readers, observing a company actually implementing EOS will make the process easier to follow and apply. It also provides greater insights into the realities of implementation.

When we decided to write this book, it was a true passion project. As we started to write, the words and situations flowed out of us like water. The reason is that this is what we do. Every day we are in the real world, helping entrepreneurial leadership teams of small to mid-sized companies achieve the results you will read about. Nothing is made up. There is not one ounce of theory. Together we have delivered almost two thousand full-day sessions with almost two hundred companies.

Our passion and obsession is you, the entrepreneurial leader. You take risks, you build remarkable things, and you suffer. Helping you get everything you want from your business is why we exist. We are here to help you permanently resolve the root cause of your issues, to build something greater, and live the life you want and deserve. EOS was created for you by someone just like you. You are real, raw, and lay it on the line every day with no safety nets and no BS. We feel you deserve a solution worthy of who you are and how you operate.

We believe *Get A Grip* will give you everything you need to transform the performance of your business. But if you need more resources, like free downloadable tools and an entrepreneurial community to access, or you want to find a Certified EOS Implementer in your area, you can access them at www.eosworldwide.com. But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Turn the page, start reading, and begin the process of truly getting a grip on your business.

CHAPTER 1

THE INCIDENT

SITTING IN HER CAR, Eileen Sharp stared intently at Vic's SUV parked across the lot. For a brief moment, she envisioned gunning the engine and ramming it. The hint of a smile appeared at the corners of her mouth.

Eileen was angry and frustrated with Vic. For the first time, she thought of ending the partnership with her childhood friend. After a few moments, she gathered herself and regained some resolve.

"I'm not walking away from what we've built these last ten years," Eileen said under her breath. "You don't just turn your back on a \$7 million company and thirty-five employees."

Still, what her business partner had done in the meeting was a new low. The fact that he had said it in front of the other leaders was unforgivable. She couldn't just let it go.

Suddenly Eileen realized she was late for the Business Roundtable reception. She took a deep breath and checked herself in the rear-view mirror. As she pulled out of the parking lot, she muttered, "That son of a bitch."

Four hours earlier, at 1:00 P.M., Eileen had rushed into the conference room carrying her laptop and a mound of paperwork. Determined to begin Swan Services' quarterly executive committee meeting on time for once, she had scurried around all morning and skipped lunch to prepare the presentation and numerous reports that would tell the story of the last eighteen months.

This had been the first tough stretch in Swan Services' history. Until the last year and a half, the company had been profitable and had grown quickly. Swan was still doing well, but the steady growth had stopped. Everything seemed to be getting more difficult: winning new customers, keeping them happy, operating profitably—you name it. She had always taken pride in her work ethic, but recently the demands of her business required so much attention that she regularly missed important events with her husband and two children. For the first time, Eileen was frustrated, and she could tell that other members of the team were frustrated, too.

Eileen burst through the conference room door ready to apologize, once again, for being late. Instead, she found only two of her five colleagues. Sue Meecham, Swan's vice president of sales, was reviewing the latest pipeline numbers. Eileen's longtime friend and business associate and the acting director of marketing, Art Pearson, was stowing his overcoat and briefcase in the corner of the conference room.

"Hello, Sue. Hi, Art. Any sign of the others?" she asked.

"No," replied Sue. "Unless you count Evan racing by a minute ago and looking relieved to see he wasn't the only one late."

Eileen rolled her eyes, dropped her materials at the front of the table, and asked Art to help connect her laptop to the LCD projector. In walked Carol Henning, Swan's controller. Eileen distributed presentation folders to the three executives and began bringing up the PowerPoint presentation she had prepared. Vice President of Operations Evan McCullough entered looking rushed and disheveled. And then the team waited.

Vic finally strolled through the door at 1:14, still in the middle of an animated phone conversation with what sounded like a prospective client. He made a few exaggerated gestures to the rest of the team, making it clear he was attempting to end the call. Eventually he hung up, sat down, and apologized as only Vic could.

"Sorry, guys. That was the procurement guy at Shoreline Industries," he said. "I've been trying to pry that deal out of his hands and back under the control of our buyer for so long, I think we used a slide rule to put the bid together."

The entire team laughed—even Eileen. She tossed her founding partner and CEO a folder, strode to the front of the room, grabbed

the remote control, and launched into her presentation. Over the next sixty minutes, she detailed the troubling signs that had developed in the five quarters since the company's breakout year:

- In Swan's eighth full year, revenues grew at a record pace and exceeded \$7 million for the first time. However, the company hadn't managed to hit its quarterly revenue goals since. Against projected growth of 14 percent, revenue had grown only 1.5 percent in the previous year and was flat in Q1 this year.
- Profitability had taken a beating. On the heels of a great year, the team had invested heavily in a foundation for further growth. Those investments had not yet paid off.
- Pinpointing the cause of these problems had been difficult. Eileen had been studying the issue for three quarters and now felt comfortable sharing her findings with the team:
 - Swan's sales team had missed its new revenue goal in three of the last five quarters.
 - Existing customers had begun leaving—a new phenomenon. At first the occasional defections seemed trivial, but the trend was disconcerting.
 - Labor costs had increased significantly. Swan had begun adding people and upgrading talent last year in an effort to ramp up to its five-year goal of \$20 million in revenue.
 - Despite the company's paying more for talent, a couple key employees had resigned abruptly in recent months. Neither cited internal issues in exit interviews, but Eileen had come to believe that Swan's once great culture—one devoted to being a genuinely fun place to work hard and get great results—had begun eroding.

None of these issues was new. The team had discussed each one at some length in prior quarterly meetings, often staying late into the night and ordering pizza, but rarely reaching agreement on anything, much less a plan of action. The prevailing sense was that the primary cause of all of these issues was somehow outside of their control.

One quarter, the economy was to blame. The next, it was the software conversion. Last quarter, Vic had actually used the terms “bad

mojo” and “funk” in an attempt to quantify the problem, suggesting that the company had lost its “Midas touch.”

“Dwelling on all this bad news drags us down,” he had said, staring directly at Eileen. “We’ve lost our swagger, and—while I know some of you will dismiss this as metaphysical mumbo jumbo—I’m convinced that we have to get that swagger back at all costs.”

At the time Eileen had taken Vic’s observation in stride. She had learned long before to ignore his constant baiting and avoid getting sucked into titanic battles over trivial matters. Instead, Eileen had analyzed the situation thoroughly and carefully prepared her plan of attack for today’s meeting. She had entered the conference room intent on staying positive and focusing on solutions to the thirteen things she believed the executive committee actually *could* control. But first, she needed to present her mountain of evidence to convince them that Swan had a right to expect more.

Eileen methodically made her case; the data was irrefutable. Despite a larger budget, Swan’s marketing efforts had produced fewer qualified leads. The sales team’s close ratio had declined, and it had more frequently offered discounted pricing on the deals it *had* won. In operations, revenues per employee had fallen, while errors and missed deadlines were up.

As she walked through the troubling details, Eileen saw the mood in the conference room change. Arms were uncrossed. Heads began to nod. Notes were taken. Near the end of her presentation, Vic pushed himself away from the conference table and held his hands up dramatically, as though he had eaten too much at Thanksgiving dinner.

“No mas, boss,” he said with a smile. “We get it.”

When the laughter subsided, Eileen suggested the team take a quick break and return ready to start solving problems. In high spirits, she headed for the ladies’ room. That’s where a nightmare scenario began to unravel.

Eileen heard someone slide quickly into the restroom before the swinging door closed behind her.

“Um, Eileen?”

“Yes, Sue—what is it?” said the startled leader.

“I don’t know exactly how to say this,” she began. “So I’ll just spit it out. I think it would be best for all concerned if I left Swan, effective immediately.”

Eileen was floored. She considered Sue a shining star—and an integral part of Swan’s future. Since joining the company two years before, after a successful stint selling for a competitor, the young VP of sales had been a tireless and skilled asset. She consistently worked harder and got better results than anyone else in the organization and had recently been rewarded with a promotion.

“Wha—I mean, *why*?” Eileen stammered.

“It’s clear to me that I’m the problem,” Sue said, straining. “You and Vic promoted me nine months ago. Since then our team hasn’t hit a single sales goal. I haven’t even hit my *own* sales goals! On the rare occasion that we *do* win a deal, we seem to be screwing that up, too.” She turned and splashed cold water on her face.

“What in the world do you *mean*, Sue?” she cried. “Of all the people in that room, you’re the *least* of my worries!”

“I don’t know how you can say that, Eileen. Every slide in your presentation hit me like a ton of bricks! We’re not selling enough, margins are down, and the customers we do sell seem to be putting undue stress on the ops team. What’s more, all of this seemed to start about the same time I was promoted! If the sales team and I aren’t to blame, who is?” she asked.

Eileen started to sweat. Was she about to drive away her most promising ally—the young leader she believed Swan could least afford to lose?

“Sue,” she said gently. “I appreciate the way you take responsibility for everything you do. Candidly, I wish the other members of the executive committee felt the same way. But . . .” she trailed off, unsure of what to say next.

After an awkward pause, Eileen continued. “Please, Sue, give me a week or so to sort things out,” she said. “I just *can’t* let you resign.”

“Well, um . . .” Sue seemed surprised that Swan’s capable leader was at a loss for answers. “Okay, thank you. I’m grateful for your confidence in me.”

“You have nothing to say ‘thank you’ for,” Eileen replied. “I feel terrible about making you doubt your value to this team.”

Before exiting the restroom, Eileen thought about how best to proceed. She had originally planned to focus first on marketing and sales performance but decided to switch gears.

“Let’s discuss client retention first,” Eileen said as the meeting resumed, distributing a large Excel spreadsheet. Vic stared at the endless rows of numbers and sighed audibly. Undaunted, Eileen walked the team through a detailed accounting of the spending habits and life cycles of every client in Swan’s history. Eileen explained the conclusions she had drawn: Two years ago, Swan’s average client had engaged the firm for 2.5 projects and spent an average of \$174,000 over its life cycle. Today, both of those numbers had dropped. Two of the largest clients on the spreadsheet had decreased their spending by more than 10 percent, and one of those clients hadn’t spent a dime with Swan for over a year.

Evan began to sweat as all eyes turned his way. He glanced nervously at his colleagues—the passionate founder with a short attention span; a young, hard-charging sales leader; an annoying marketing guy; a curmudgeon from accounting; and the other founder waving an incriminating spreadsheet. By all accounts, the day had taken a nasty turn.

“Hold on here, guys,” he stammered. “This is the first I’ve seen of this information. I’ll admit it sounds pretty bad, but until I look into the numbers and talk to my people, I have no idea where to even begin.”

“Relax, Evan,” said Vic. “Weren’t you paying attention to Eileen’s feel-good movie of the year? Every one of us is sucking wind right now!”

Evan chuckled halfheartedly. The rest of the group stared at their spreadsheets, waiting to see how Eileen would respond to Vic’s attempt to lighten the mood.

“He’s right, Evan,” she said coolly. “This isn’t a witch hunt. I just hoped we could work together this afternoon to figure out how to get these numbers headed back in the other direction. Perhaps I should have shared this data with you before our meeting today. You’re so busy already that I didn’t want to bother you.”

“But I’m not even sure the numbers are accurate,” he protested.

“The numbers *are* accurate,” said Carol abruptly. “I put the spreadsheet together myself. And isn’t it your *job* to know what the numbers mean?”

As usual, a cutting remark from Carol brought the discussion to a standstill. A capable and dedicated resource, Swan’s controller had

never been admired for her interpersonal communication skills. Even when accurate, her blunt feedback often drove others away and shut down meetings—which was just fine by Carol.

The room was uncomfortably silent. Eileen's blood pressure began to rise. The executive committee's discussions had been derailed too many times by petty bickering, and she wasn't about to let that happen today.

"Just a minute, Carol," she said sternly. "Remember, today is about staying positive and working through our problems together, not arguing or casting blame."

Eileen turned back to her VP of operations. "Evan," she said, "I'm guessing the whole team supports your desire for more information, but we need to spend a few minutes brainstorming today to see if we can identify any obvious opportunities to improve. We should also talk about the best way to quickly get more reliable information on why our clients seem to be leaving faster and spending less than they did before."

"Right," said Art. "Great idea, Chief. Maybe my firm can conduct a focus group with some clients whose spending has declined or stopped?"

Eileen shot glances at both Art and Sue. The two had been arguing a lot recently about marketing priorities and Art's enthusiasm for costly new marketing projects. Before Eileen could say something, Evan interjected.

"Sorry, Eileen, I didn't mean to be so defensive," he said. "I've just been swamped lately with my own projects and babysitting my staff. There's hardly any time to come up for air as it is, and then to be confronted with this..." his voice trailed off.

"I get it, Evan," said Eileen gently, suddenly feeling very tired. Despite the lack of progress, she decided to take another short break. This dead end with Evan had sucked the energy out of the room. She needed to get him (and the rest of the team) reengaged. "Let's take ten. We'll reconvene at four."

Eileen made eye contact with Vic as she broke the meeting. She cocked her head in the direction of their offices, and he nodded his understanding. Vic ducked into the restroom and then quickly headed back to Eileen's office, where he found his talented, driven partner

leaning back in her chair with eyes closed and arms crossed behind her head. Through the years he had rarely seen Eileen stand still, much less meditate.

“Hey, Vic,” she said dejectedly.

“What’s up, Eileen?” he replied.

“Well,” she began, “I know you’re going to say, ‘I told you so,’ but I’m really worried this team wasn’t prepared for what I shared with them today.”

“You mean Evan?” asked Vic. “He’s just being a defensive control freak, like always. Don’t let it—”

“Not just Evan,” Eileen interjected. “Sue tried to resign in the rest-room during the last break.”

“What?” cried Vic. “Why didn’t you tell me? Why didn’t *she* tell me? What the hell is going on here?”

Eileen responded wearily, “Slow down, Vic. It just happened an hour ago—there was no time to tell you. Besides, I talked her out of it, at least for a week.”

“Well that’s just *great*,” said Vic sarcastically. “At least one of our best young minds is happy here for another *week*! Great job, Eileen.”

The more Vic thought about it, the angrier he got.

“I still can’t believe you didn’t involve me in this conversation!” he shouted. “We’re *partners*, for one thing. And Sue works for *me* in sales. She’s my only direct report, for God’s sake. Why on earth would she resign to *you*?”

Listening to Vic’s histrionics, Eileen regretted her decision to put glass walls and doors on all the executive offices. Anyone from the rows of cubicles outside her office would know the two partners were arguing yet again.

“Vic, please sit down. I called you back here to bring you into the loop and get your help. I couldn’t have called you into our impromptu conference in the *ladies’ room*! Please?” she pleaded, her tone softening.

Vic quickly checked the office behind him and sat down.

“Okay,” Vic replied more calmly. “But shouldn’t we go get her and work this out?”

“I don’t think so,” said Eileen. “I’ve been watching Sue since the last break, and it looks like she’s calmed down a bit. If we stop the

meeting to rehash our conversation, we'll just reopen the wound. Let's give her some time to rethink things and speak with her again later in the week."

"I guess that makes sense," said Vic.

"I'd really like to finish this meeting, Vic," said Eileen. "We've got to respond to these challenges we face, and we have to do it *together*. That said, I underestimated how personally the team would take my matter-of-fact approach."

"Is that what you call it?" asked Vic. "How about hair-on-fire approach?"

"Stop it," she said with a smile.

"I'm with you, partner," said Vic, getting serious. "But I'm begging you to ease up a little. Sue and Evan responded the way they did because it sometimes seems nothing is ever good enough for you."

"I know," Eileen acknowledged. "But we can't just sweep these problems under the rug."

"Agreed," replied Vic as they left the office. "But let's focus on forming a plan rather than dwelling on problems."

Later, when she looked back, Eileen would remember that conversation with Vic as the only bright spot in easily the worst day of her professional career. From there, it took less than twenty minutes to drive the bus off a cliff.

Back in the conference room, she asked the executives to jot down five to ten potential solutions to the client retention problem. Then she stepped to the whiteboard and asked the executives to share their lists, beginning with Carol.

"Better quality control," she began. Eileen recorded the idea.

"Make fewer mistakes. Manage projects better. Quit making up stuff during the sales process. Sell at higher margins so we can hire better people."

Eileen winced at Carol's blunt criticisms of nearly everyone else in the room.

"Thank you for your usual candor, Carol," she said, forging ahead. "Sue?"

"Clearer statements of work," Sue began. "I also had selling at higher margins. And, Evan, please don't take this personally, but I do think we need a better project management system. It's too hard to

get information out of your department when clients ask for status updates.”

“That’s okay, Sue. I had the same thing on my list,” said Evan.

“I also had better invoicing,” said Sue, bracing for Carol’s response.

“How so?” Carol responded, folding her arms across her chest.

“Well, we get a lot of complai—um, inquiries, about our invoices. If they were delivered more promptly and included clearer detail about the work being performed, I think our clients would appreciate it,” she said gently.

“Well, just how do you think I can do that when we aren’t defining the project properly during the sales process,” Carol barked, “and when I’m sorting through emails and Post-it notes from operations to figure out what the heck to bill each month?”

Vic stopped doodling on his legal pad and cut in suddenly. “Whoa there, Carol,” he said. “Let’s just get the ideas on the list.”

“But I—” protested Carol.

“Damn it, Carol,” interjected Eileen, surprised by her own temper. “We’re just brainstorming possible solutions. Sue’s got a valid point. Can we move on?”

“Whatever,” the testy controller said dismissively. She settled back in her chair and glared at Sue.

“Art, anything to add?” Eileen continued.

“Just focus groups or some kind of market research, Chief,” said Art, again getting looks from Sue and Carol.

“Very well,” Eileen said. “Vic?”

“Just three things, Eileen,” he said. “First, I think we need new offices.”

“What?” Carol said reflexively.

“New offices. I know we have a couple of years left on our lease. But this place is dark, too corporate, and not conducive to fostering the kind of teamwork we need to knock our clients’ socks off. I said that when we moved out here to the ’burbs three years ago, and I think it’s more true now. Plus, we have to do something radical to shake this run of bad luck.”

Wanting to be fair, Eileen dutifully recorded “new offices” on the whiteboard. She heard Carol murmur “Oh boy” under her breath. Undaunted, Vic continued.

“Second, I think we might be in the wrong business.”

Everyone in the room suddenly fixed his or her complete attention on Swan's unpredictable CEO.

"You heard me correctly," Vic continued. "We need to reinvent this company from the ground up with a renewed focus on what clients are going to need over the next ten years. We're still selling plain old business and technology projects, and our clients are just not buying those anymore."

"Okay," Eileen said slowly. She looked skeptically at Vic, poised to write something. "How, exactly, would you say that for the list?"

"How would I say that for the list? C'mon, Eileen, I just suggested we scrap our business model and start over, and you want to know how to write that on your *list*?"

"Well, yes. I do," replied the surprised president. "What's wrong with that?"

"Because your list," he said, "is a waste of time—trivial details. We might as well whitewash the fence while the house is burning!"

A switch had been flipped in Vic's brain. When he looked back on this moment later, it would never be clear exactly what had set him off. He did recall feeling absolutely certain that Swan Services had been going about things in precisely the wrong way for all these years. He was suddenly seized by an overwhelming desire to convince his longtime partner that incremental progress was not enough.

"Call it 'reinvent Swan,'" he said sharply.

"And the third thing," he said, "is that you and I need to admit that the way we're running this company isn't working."

Immediately the mood in the room shifted from painfully awkward to panic-stricken. The executives worked hard to avoid eye contact. The fan on the LCD projector hummed loudly. A throat was cleared nervously. Eileen opened her mouth to speak but said nothing.

"Face it, partner," Vic continued. "Running this company has gotten *hard*. We're not having fun anymore, and we're not hitting our numbers like we used to. I think we've been asleep at the switch for the last year, and we need to make some radical changes or we're screwed."

Eileen's head was swimming. "How do you mean?"

"We've been running this company together for a long time—me at thirty thousand feet, you in the trenches. Clearly, that hasn't worked as of late," he said loudly. "So I'd propose we switch it up."

Eileen glanced at the other executives. Four sets of wide eyes darted back and forth between her and her partner, trying to figure out what was going to happen next. Eileen agreed that something was broken, but Vic running day-to-day operations? That was truly crazy!

“You’re suggesting that *you* run the company day to day?” she asked, trying in vain not to sound defensive.

“Sure, why not?” he asked.

That did it. Eileen felt the heat rising into her face.

“Why not?” she hissed. “I’ll tell you why not! You have absolutely *no idea* what ‘day to day’ is. It means being in this office nearly every day for the last six months. It means seventy-hour workweeks. It means spending more time with your kids on a cell phone than in person—missing baseball games, parent-teacher conferences, and *birthdays*, for God’s sake! It means paying attention to detail. It means discipline and sacrifice.”

“Maybe the way *you* do it,” Vic said firmly.

“C’mon, Vic, you’re a *sales guy!*” She regretted the words as soon as she said them.

“First of all, Eileen, I’m a hell of a lot more than a ‘sales guy.’ For starters, I’m your cofounder and partner—we’ve built this business *together*, and you know it.”

“You’re right, Vic,” said Eileen, backpedalling futilely. “I didn’t mean—”

“And being a ‘sales guy’ means I understand people,” Vic continued. “I know how to build and leverage relationships, how to get things done through others. Those things *matter!* You’ve spent the last three months locked in your office with your spreadsheets, intent on convincing us all that the sky is falling. And what has it gotten us? Your most promising executive resigned in the restroom. Evan’s so overworked he keeps a *cot* in his office, and today he spent three hours with us focused on everything he’s doing wrong. Your old friend Art the vulture is circling our carcass hoping for more work, and Carol’s here to point out what everyone else is doing wrong.”


Vic jumped up and drew a tangled series of lines and swirls on the whiteboard. “What it’s gotten us,” he shouted, “is a big, hairy, dysfunctional *mess!*” Vic handed his marker to Eileen on his way out

the door, leaving the stunned president alone with her wide-eyed executive committee.

“I think we’re done here,” she said in a barely audible whisper.

The team filed silently out of the conference room. Eileen sat for a moment, stunned. She and Vic had argued many times before, but something about this blowup felt different. The severity of Vic’s attack had surprised and hurt her.

Having just seen her partner beeline toward his office, Eileen elected to gather her things and head straight to the parking lot. She wasn’t sure exactly where to go; she just knew better than to risk further escalating the confrontation. Arriving at her car, she chucked her things on the passenger seat and noticed the hastily scribbled Post-it note affixed to the steering wheel:



Biz Roundtable
Cocktail Event
Walker Museum 6-8

Eileen had been a member of the Twin Cities Business Roundtable—a peer group for small business owners—for three years. These days she rarely had time to attend the group’s regular social and education events. She had written the note earlier that morning after promising several people she would make it tonight. Still seething, Eileen stole one last glance at Vic’s vehicle before pulling slowly out of the lot.

“I’d rather chew glass than make small talk right now,” she thought grimly. “On the other hand, maybe a stiff drink will do me some good.”

HOPE

Vic slammed open his office door, replaying the last few minutes in his head. Gradually coming to grips with what he had just done to his partner, he slumped into his chair, dropped his head, and rubbed his temples. Slowly Vic allowed himself to acknowledge how scared and unhappy he had become these last few months.

He'd been having trouble sleeping for the first time in his life. His trademark confidence had begun to erode, causing him to play it safe and avoid conflict, another first. Vic began to realize his own frustrations and self-doubt had caused the sudden attack. He had lashed out at Eileen because her relentless focus on the negative made it impossible to ignore the fact that he and the rest of the team at Swan just weren't getting it done.

"Damn," thought Vic. He hit Eileen's speed dial, hoping for the chance to make things right.

Eileen checked her vibrating smartphone at a stoplight.

She pressed the "ignore" button when the name "Vic Hightower" popped up on the display. After thirty years she knew well how he operated. He was calling to apologize.

Their "professional" relationship had begun on a whim, when Vic suggested they start a lemonade stand in their neighborhood, the City Lakes district near downtown Minneapolis. With Vic on a street corner reining in passersby and Eileen managing the stand, the "business" was a success from the start.

Throughout their many entrepreneurial adventures, Vic had been the front man and Eileen the backbone of their operations. The two ran numerous ventures as teens—a lawn-care business, a bike repair shop, and even a stint reselling bulk candy to other middle-school students. Although they pursued different tracks through college, the pair made an effort to stay connected. Eileen studied business and graduated with honors from the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management. Vic changed schools and majors three times, all the while less interested in studying than in running a series of remarkably profitable ventures from his dorm rooms and apartments.

Eileen secured a high-profile job with a prestigious investment banking and management consulting firm right out of school. For nine years she moved up quickly in several of the firm's practice areas and ultimately worked closely with more than sixty companies. From the beginning, she had planned to eventually leave the firm to buy a business—or start her own.

Vic's postcollegiate career was as fluid as Eileen's was stable. He took his first sales job as a fourth-year junior and was immediately successful. Over the next few years he replayed the same story several times—excelling in his first several months as a business developer only to later become bored, frustrated, or both. Despite the frequent job changes, though, Vic's talent and drive to win always helped him perform at a high level.

Although on divergent paths, the two friends spoke often. During one such call eleven years earlier, Eileen had first sought feedback regarding her plan to start a technology consulting business. Within days, the two had cobbled together a compelling business plan and had committed to making it happen—together.

Eileen snapped out of her walk down memory lane when she arrived at the Walker Art Center. She parked and went inside.

"Well, I'll be," said a familiar voice from the registration table. "I was beginning to think you were a figment of my imagination!"

Eileen smiled at Bill Pullian, executive director of the Business Roundtable, and extended her hand sheepishly. "I figure I'd better show up every once in a while," she replied. "Otherwise you're going to think my membership fee is a charitable contribution."

Walking away, Eileen wondered if Bill could tell she was still reeling after her train wreck of an afternoon. She glanced to her right to see Miguel Gutierrez zeroing in on the open bar.

"Hello, stranger, can I buy you a drink?" he asked.

"Very generous of you, Miguel," she answered. "I'll be sure to return the favor when we're at some high-priced fund-raiser."

Eileen was genuinely glad to see Miguel. He had been a member of her roundtable since she joined the group more than three years ago. Although he ran one of the largest and fastest growing companies in the Twin Cities chapter, he had always been generous with his time and counsel.

“How ya been?” he said, extending his arms for a hug.

“I’ve had better days,” she said.

“Well, let’s grab a drink and talk about it,” said Miguel.

The pair collected their cocktails and retreated to a less crowded spot.

“So what’s happening?” Miguel asked.

“It’s really just the same old story...” Her voice trailed off, and Miguel raised an eyebrow to invite more.

Eileen hesitated. On the one hand, Miguel was the *perfect* confidant—very successful but humble enough to share his trials and tribulations with other members of his roundtable. On the other hand, by sharing what had happened this afternoon, Eileen worried she would be admitting that the company she had painstakingly built was falling apart.

Miguel motioned to some nearby chairs. “Why don’t you start at the beginning?”

“Well,” Eileen said with a heavy sigh, “you know how much harder things seemed to have gotten since our \$7 million year.”

Miguel nodded; Eileen had shared a few details in prior discussions.

“I’ve spent most of the last year trying to figure out why and to get my team to respond. Until today they’d been mostly ignoring me, blaming the problem on stuff outside our control. Today I finally convinced them otherwise,” she said ruefully.

Miguel looked confused. “That sounds like *good* news.”

“You’d think so, wouldn’t you?” replied Eileen with a sarcastic laugh. “In less than three hours, my best executive tried to quit—in the ladies’ room, no less. My ops guy pretty much ran screaming from the room when we started talking about ways to improve customer satisfaction. Our marketing guy cares more about generating revenue for his own agency than our survival, and my controller spent the whole meeting pissing everyone else off.”

“Sounds awful,” Miguel said soothingly.

“Those were the *bright spots!*” said Eileen. Both she and Miguel had a good laugh at her expense. More comfortable telling the story now, she went on to describe the private discussion and public conflict with Vic. Miguel listened intently, asked a few clarifying questions, and then grabbed a business card from his coat pocket.

“You’re right, Eileen, that is one lousy day,” he acknowledged. “But it might be the best thing that ever happened to you.”

Eileen was puzzled. “How is *that* possible?”

“Because it happened to me,” said Miguel, smiling.

“One of your people resigned in the *ladies’ room*?” she joked.

Miguel laughed and continued, “About five years ago, I had—by far—my worst day in business. The company was really struggling, and it had been unbelievably hard on my family and me. I was working all the time, waking up at all hours of the night—it was awful.”

Eileen was shocked. Of all the entrepreneurs she knew, Miguel seemed like the calmest and most balanced.

“Finally, on that terrible day, I decided I’d had enough. I realized that everything about the way my company operated needed to change. Luckily, a friend and mentor helped me understand I probably couldn’t make that kind of change on my own. So I took his advice and, as he had done a few years earlier, asked for help.”

Miguel took his business card and wrote down a phone number on the front, then flipped it over and wrote something else on the back. He slid the card to Eileen.

“When you’re ready to make things better—permanently—call my friend Alan Roth,” Miguel said, standing.

“Wait, Miguel—who is this Alan?” Eileen said, standing as well. “Why do you think he can help me?”

“Because that’s what he does, Eileen. He helps people like us get what we want from our businesses,” he said.

“He’s a consultant?” she said with a sour look. “Listen, Miguel, I really respect you, but if I walk back into my business tomorrow suggesting we hire another consultant, I’ll have a full-scale mutiny on my hands!”

Miguel nodded reassuringly. “I get it, Eileen. I felt the same way about consultants, which is why it took me six months to call Alan myself. But he’s not a consultant—he calls himself an ‘implementer.’ All I can tell you is that his system and approach are completely different from anything you and your team have experienced. And it’ll flat-out work.”

“I don’t know, Miguel,” protested Eileen.

A mutual friend walked by, and Miguel held up a finger to get her attention.

“I have to run, Eileen—Melanie and I have been trying to connect for weeks,” he said. “I really do think Alan can help. Call him.”

“Thanks, Miguel,” she said, fingering the business card. “You’ve definitely given me something to think about.”

Before placing Miguel’s card in her bag, she noticed her friend had written something intriguing on the back:

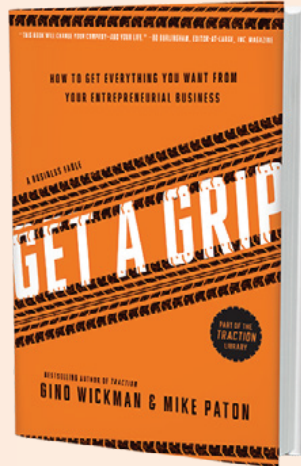


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HOW
TO BE A
GREAT
BOSS

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *TRACTION*

GINO WICKMAN
RENÉ BOER

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WHY THE WORD “BOSS”?

Consider this for a minute: no matter what title is on your business card, be it foreman, supervisor, manager, director, vice president, president, or chief executive officer, the people who report to you call you their *boss*.

The word “boss” comes from the Dutch word “baas,” originally a term of respect used to address a person in charge. We use “boss” purposely because that is what you are—someone in charge, who leads and manages people. If you are ever in doubt, please come back to this definition.

We urge you to wear the title “boss” with pride. You’re in charge. Be in charge. Don’t be apologetic or tiptoe around it. Don’t give in to all the politically correct and watered-down titles such as “team leader,” “coach,” or “people champion.” These terms certainly describe what a great boss is and does; they’re just not all-encompassing titles. Take pride in the responsibility, but don’t become arrogant or take the title “boss” for granted.

Never use the phrase “I’m the boss” in an overbearing or entitled manner. No one respects people like that. Instead, they whisper behind the backs of bosses who are so stuck on themselves that they take their authority and responsibility lightly.

Walk through the offices or visit the production floors of great companies and you're likely to find engaged employees who are well led by great bosses. Those bosses create an environment where people show up every day because they want to be there, not because they have to.

So, if you're a leader or manager of people and you aspire to be a great boss, this book is written for you. You need only keep an open mind and commit to becoming great. We'll provide you with the tools to help you get there.



CHAPTER 1

being a great boss

“If we treat people as they ought to be, we help them become what they are capable of becoming.”

—GOETHE

WHAT IF EVERY DAY YOUR PEOPLE brought their “A game” to work? Do you believe that is even possible?

In the next 154 pages we intend to show that it *is* possible, and we will teach you the tools that will transform how well your people perform for you. You will discover how to:

- effectively delegate work and free yourself up to truly lead and manage,
- assess your team and surround yourself with Great People,

- apply five leadership practices and five management practices of all great bosses,
- communicate powerfully with each of your employees, and
- deal with employees that don't meet your expectations.

This book is different from any other leadership or management book you've ever read—and literally tens of thousands of them have been written. What makes it different is its practical application and immediate impact. It offers no theory. Instead, it offers a straightforward game plan to help you become a great leader and manager. We can say that because every word and tool in this book have been tested and proven by thousands of leaders and managers whose influence and results are undeniable.

In the last twenty years we have personally worked with the leadership teams of more than 180 companies and more than 2,000 leaders and managers. In addition, our organization, EOS Worldwide, has 150 EOS Implementers around the world who have taught these tools to another 2,500 companies and more than 25,000 leaders and managers. Because we have tackled day-in, day-out problems with so many bosses, we know what works and what does not.

Gino's first book, *Traction*, which has sold hundreds of thousands of copies, uncovered a vital need in the small business world: a need for a simple, real-world guide to help the leaders and managers of entrepreneurial companies become great bosses. That compelled us to write this

book and provide that simple formula. Anyone with direct reports who is seeking a practical, proven way to excel at what they do can follow these steps to bring out the best in their people.

This book is for you if:

- you are a leader, manager, or supervisor of people in a privately held, 10- to 250-person entrepreneurial company; or
- you want to get the most out of your people and seek a simple, effective, and impactful way to become a great boss.

This book is also written to help the “not-so-good bosses” get out of the way—to help them acknowledge that they lack the basic understanding, desire, and capacity to develop the skills that will make them great.

We have learned that to get the most from your people—to have a highly motivated workforce—you, in your role as boss, must create an environment where your people will thrive. Matthew Kelly, in his book *Off Balance: Getting Beyond the Work-Life Balance Myth to Personal and Professional Satisfaction*, points out that highly motivated employees enjoy both personal and professional satisfaction from what they do. “They work hard . . . they enjoy the people they work with; they feel respected by their boss; they feel their work is making a contribution to customers’ lives; they find the challenge of their work matches their abilities; and they know why they go to work each day.”

This may be apparent to you already, but what is surprising is this: Kelly, in his efforts to find a link between “work-life balance” and a highly engaged workforce, interviewed well-respected people at dozens of the world’s best companies. He asked these companies if he could interview people who they thought best exemplified work-life balance. What he discovered after interviewing these people was that they actually worked an average of nine hours *more* per week than their counterparts did. They valued job satisfaction over work-life balance. So, when you focus your efforts to improve your people’s satisfaction level with their jobs, versus the number of hours they work, think of the upside.

Here’s something else we’ve learned after we surveyed our clients at EOS Worldwide. When asked why they engaged us, 82.4 percent reported they were not getting enough out of their people; they weren’t on the same page, working together to win. In fact, “people issues” are one of the most common frustrations shared by bosses—not sales, not profit . . . people! However, keep this in mind: *as frustrated as you might be with your people, the fact is, they are your number one competitive advantage.*

Think about that for a minute. You may hold patents, own proprietary technology, and have tremendous brand awareness, but in the end, it all boils down to people. So, for better or worse, the people you employ or who report directly to you are your only real differentiator.

Competitors can steal your ideas and copy your products. After all, they essentially do what you do. They can

even steal your playbook—how you do what you do. But it doesn't matter because in the end, being a great boss comes down to execution—doing what you do better than the competition. Here is a great example. During the 1960s, opponents of the Green Bay Packers, who won two Super Bowls and five NFL Championships during that decade, had seen Vince Lombardi's famous "Power Sweep" so many times that they not only knew the play inside and out, they also knew when it was coming. But they still couldn't stop it. Lombardi was that good at leading his players to become that good at running that play.

The advantage of being a boss like Lombardi is that you have the opportunity to surround yourself with people who you want to work with and who want to succeed. You have the responsibility to hire them and fire them. If you're not satisfied with the performance of the people reporting to you, you have to accept the responsibility of doing something about it. However, before you fire anyone, you must ask yourself, "Have I done everything possible to make them successful? Have I failed them in any way?" Make sure you've done your part.

As we've mentioned, the tools we teach in this book are simple; they have to be, because the journey to become a great boss is not easy. People often confuse "simple" and "easy." The definition of "simple" is *not elaborate, not complicated, easy to understand*. The definition of "easy" is *not hard or difficult; requiring no great effort; free from pain, discomfort or care*.

The tools and exercises that comprise this "how to" guide have been honed while working hands-on with thousands

of bosses. In each chapter we share stories from every type of boss—owners, leadership team members, managers, and supervisors—to show you that these tools truly work for bosses at any level. They will help you lead, manage, and retain the sort of employees we call Great People. And the more Great People you surround yourself with, the more Great People you will attract to your organization. These Great People will free you from the day-to-day grind that has kept you from getting the most from your business and living a more fulfilling life. If we've piqued your interest, read on.

STATE OF THE AMERICAN WORKFORCE

Since 2000, the Gallup Organization has been conducting an annual survey of American workers. The results haven't changed much year to year and reveal that only 31.5 percent of full-time American workers are “engaged” at their jobs. These employees show up early, leave late, come up with creative solutions, attract and retain customers, and bring energy to the workplace. Jim Clifton, Gallup's CEO, asserts that this group more than likely works for a great boss.

However, Gallup reports that 17.5 percent of American workers are “actively disengaged” at work. This group likely works for a boss that makes them miserable, and as a result, they spread their discontent throughout the organization. These employees are more likely to steal from their employer, miss days at work, and drive customers away.

Sadly, the survey shows that the remaining 51 percent of American workers are “not engaged” at work! These employees meet the minimum requirements, but they don’t view their jobs as a major component of their daily lives. They’re flying just under the radar while collecting their paycheck. It’s been estimated that their lost productivity costs American businesses a staggering \$500 billion annually.

Clifton goes on to state that the single most important decision that business owners make is deciding whom to hire or promote to management positions. Choosing the right people propels their companies forward, while the wrong people hold them back. Additionally, a 2015 Harris Poll revealed that 39 percent of employees have no idea of their company’s goals and objectives, 47 percent are unfamiliar with the state of their company’s performance, and 44 percent don’t understand how the role they play helps the organization meet its goals.

Think about the implications for your organization. Gallup suggests that only a third of your employees are actually driving your results. If everyone were actively engaged at work, what results could you achieve?

Whether your results are better or worse than those revealed by these polls, you can see that significant opportunity may well exist in your organization. Are you willing to take responsibility for all the issues that have caused employees to disengage? For example, if you are constantly frustrated with people who don’t meet your expectations, but you don’t explain your expectations, you may be part of the problem. Acknowledging and taking responsibility for poor

employee performance and engagement is the first step. Poor bosses don't grasp this and will blame factors "beyond their control." Great bosses will rise to the challenge. Which boss are you?

We're facing a crisis that is not just measured by a lack of opportunity for the workforce, but also by the lack of enthusiasm that the workforce has for their jobs. We're losing our competitive advantage. You cannot expect to meet your goals with half your team sitting on the bench—and 17.5 percent actually heckling you. You need an engaged, raring-to-go workforce. Your choices are to lead, follow, or get out of the way. You must decide. And remember, choosing not to be a great boss is okay. Just get out of the way and be willing to follow.

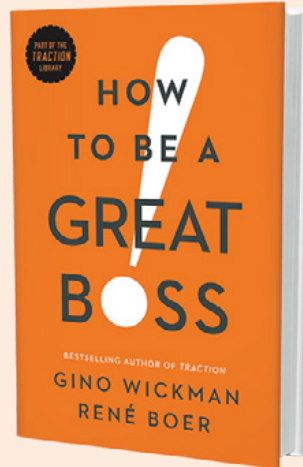
So, do your people truly matter to you? Do you view them as your number one competitive advantage? Are you excited about building a team of highly motivated employees and getting the most from them? If so, then get ready to answer the question that starts the next chapter.

HOW TO BE A GREAT BOSS

FOR LEADERS, MANAGERS, AND SUPERVISORS

GET YOUR EMPLOYEE TO BRING THEIR “A-GAME” TO WORK

Often, the difference between a group of indifferent employees and a fully engaged team comes down to one simple thing—a great boss. *How to Be a Great Boss* presents a straightforward, practical approach to help bosses at all levels of an organization get the most from their people.



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About EOS Worldwide

The Entrepreneurial Operating System® (EOS) combines timeless business principles with a set of simple, practical, real-world tools to help entrepreneurs get what they want from their businesses. EOS Worldwide offers comprehensive training and support to entrepreneurs and business coaches who want to implement EOS effectively.

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WHAT THE HECK IS

EOS?

PART OF THE
TRACTION
LIBRARY

A Complete Guide for
Employees in Companies
Running on EOS

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *TRACTION*

**GINO WICKMAN
& TOM BOUWER**



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INTRODUCTION

We've written this book for you because you play a critical role in your company's success and, therefore, your own—because your success and your company's are deeply linked.

Whether you are a customer service rep, accountant, field-service rep, salesperson, sales-support staff, welder, truck driver, architect, consultant, or any other role, this book was written to help you be more successful in your company—a company running on EOS (the Entrepreneurial Operating System).

So, what the heck is EOS?

CHAPTER 1

WHAT THE HECK IS EOS?

Your company is using EOS (the Entrepreneurial Operating System) as its “operating system.” So, what the heck does that mean for you? Before answering that question, it’s important to first understand that every company has an operating system, whether it has a name or not.

That system is the way a company organizes all of its human energy. It’s the way that the people in the organization meet, solve problems, plan, prioritize, follow processes, communicate, measure, structure, clarify roles, lead, and manage.

It's hard to understand the operating systems of most companies because the leadership teams aren't consistent in how they do the above. This inconsistency leads to poor communication, dysfunction, and employees feeling frustrated and confused about what the priorities are. Ultimately, the company never realizes its full potential.

The reason you're reading this book is that your leadership team wants everyone in your organization to understand how EOS works, to see the value of its structure, and to help them implement it.

Why one operating system? The short answer is that everyone doing it their own way in an organization can't work. You can't have a company where everyone can set the priorities, meet the way they want to meet, and use different terminology.

If you have 50 people doing everything 50 different ways, the increased complexity leads to mass chaos. Even worse, people experience incredible confusion and frustration. Simply put, you can't build a great company on multiple operating systems—you must choose one.

For instance, at an IT services company in Atlanta, every project was managed differently because each project manager led their project their own way. When employees moved from one project to the next, they had to learn a whole new project management system with different reporting, status updates, and meeting structures. As a result, they wasted a lot of time trying to learn a new system—time that should have been spent serving clients. Due to this inconsistent approach, people grew frustrated, and the company started losing clients, employees, and money.

The truth is, a team of average people running their company on one operating system will outperform a team of high achievers, each doing it their own way, every day of the week. That is why your company needs a clearly stated operating system that everyone follows.

WHY EOS?

So, why this operating system? Because it works. More than 50,000 companies all over the world run on EOS. It's a complete, simple, and powerful

operating system. It helps companies grow to achieve their vision and goals more effectively.

It also gives the employees of those companies a well-defined structure in which they can grow, feel more fulfilled in their work, and achieve their personal goals. It helps them feel more “in-the-know” about what’s going on. When you understand what the priorities of the company are, it helps you play your part in achieving them.

As Kathleen Watts, an account manager at PMMC, put it, “Before EOS, I didn’t have a lot of insight into the bigger picture. Communication from management was not streamlined. Now we’re much more aligned as an organization, and I know what we are trying to do and how I can help.”

EOS also saves time. When everyone in your organization is rowing in the same direction, you’ll find that you are communicating better. EOS eliminates unhealthy and time-wasting activities due to miscommunication. Down the road, that means avoiding train wrecks that can cost your company tons of money and cause you lots of headaches.

At a Connecticut technology firm, meetings would go for hours and hours without anything ever getting resolved. The CEO said, “Once we implemented EOS, we stopped wasting time with unnecessary meetings. We’re getting more done and are communicating more effectively with our employees. They’ve told me that as a company, we make a lot fewer mistakes and now solve problems before they become major disasters.”

EOS AND YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

EOS is specifically designed for a 10- to 250-person entrepreneurial company that is open-minded and growth-oriented. In our experience, this is where EOS has the most impact. While it works for companies larger and smaller, this is the true sweet spot for EOS.

As a part of implementing EOS, you will notice that the leadership team of your organization goes off-site occasionally for full-day working sessions. They do this to get 100 percent in sync and on the same page with each other. When away from the office, they work hard to solve all of the high-level

issues facing your company and to set quarterly priorities. This ensures that the entire organization can stay laser-focused on achieving your company vision.

Business is hard—that’s reality. With constantly changing technology, competition trying to crush you, and demanding customers and clients, your leadership team has to wrestle with 136 issues at any given time. They can’t succeed without great people throughout your organization. They can’t do it without *you*.

EOS AND YOU

It’s also important that *you* know you can’t do it alone. You need a team that you can depend on and that can depend on you. If you’ve been thinking, “What’s in it for me?” that’s fair and understandable. The short answer is that EOS will help you to work more effectively, with less frustration and a clearer understanding of the connection between your efforts and the success of your company.

As one employee said, “EOS helped me really understand where I fit in the company and how I

impact everyone else. We have a great team, and it is fun to work here.”

You may be thinking that implementing EOS in your organization sounds rigid, will stifle creativity, and will rob you of your uniqueness. Actually, just the opposite happens. Just as a computer’s operating system is an underlying framework that helps you be more productive, EOS will do the same for you and your organization. Its underlying framework will magnify your unique contribution and help you be more productive.

So now that you know why your company is implementing EOS, let’s begin the journey, because that’s what this is. EOS is not a project with a specific end date. Implementing EOS in your company is an ongoing, lifelong effort. Many companies have been running on EOS for more than 10 years.

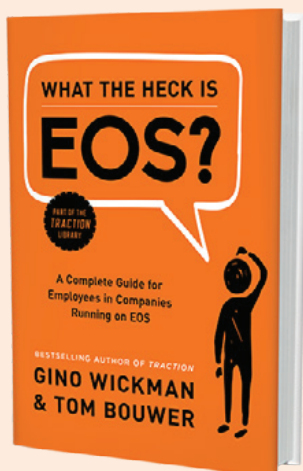
To start the journey with your company, first you need to understand the big picture, which we will describe in Chapter 2. Then, in Chapters 3-7 we will share the 5 foundational tools that form the back-bone of EOS. Finally, in Chapter 8, we will share a few bonus tools that will be the icing on the cake.

WHAT THE HECK IS EOS?

FOR LEADERS, MANAGERS, AND SUPERVISORS

ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES IN THE EOS PROCESS AND TOOLS

What the Heck is EOS? uses simple, straightforward language and provides questions about each tool that managers and employees can use in creating more ownership and buy-in at the staff level. After reading this book, employees will have a better understanding of EOS and take an active role in achieving your company's vision.



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About EOS Worldwide

The Entrepreneurial Operating System® (EOS) combines timeless business principles with a set of simple, practical, real-world tools to help entrepreneurs get what they want from their businesses. EOS Worldwide offers comprehensive training and support to entrepreneurs and business coaches who want to implement EOS effectively.

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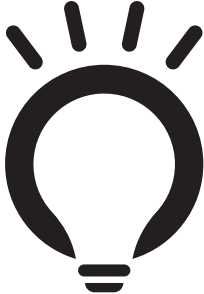
LIFE

How to Live Your Ideal Entrepreneurial Life

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *TRACTION*

GINO WICKMAN

FOREWORD BY DON TINNEY

THE
E  **S**
LIFE

ALSO BY GINO WICKMAN

Traction

Get a Grip (with Mike Paton)

Rocket Fuel (with Mark C. Winters)

How to Be a Great Boss (with Rene Boer)

What the Heck Is EOS? (with Tom Bouwer)

Entrepreneurial Leap

THE E S LIFE

How to Live Your Ideal Entrepreneurial Life

GINO WICKMAN



BenBella Books, Inc.
Dallas, TX

To all of the EOS Implementers in the world, thank you for the work that you do and your commitment to the cause.

You are making a huge impact on entrepreneurs, businesses, people, and their families. The real-world stories you contributed to this book brought it to life.

You are truly putting a dent in the universe.

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If you are a reader who is not familiar with the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS), *Traction*, or the EOS tools, that's okay. I've written this book in such a way that it will make sense. However, if you want to increase your understanding of EOS and the tools, please read *Traction: Get a Grip on Your Business*. You can also download all of the tools mentioned in this book at eoslife.com.

FOREWORD

I first met Gino in September 2005 after 27 years of being an entrepreneur and an owner of two businesses. I worked long hours seven days a week and had many dreams, some realized, some not. Gino introduced me to a set of simple tools, systematically taught and implemented, to help entrepreneurs clarify and get what they want most from their businesses. I couldn't help but imagine how different my life and business experiences would have been had I started my journey with his tools. Those thoughts compelled me to partner with Gino to take EOS, the Entrepreneurial Operating System, to the world. We set a goal of helping 10,000 entrepreneurial leadership teams run on EOS.

After seven years as Gino's partner, I started to notice an important complementary benefit to his work practices. EOS wasn't just a business system. It was how Gino lived every day of his life—applying proven life principles through simple, practical tools to create a better, richer life. As we built EOS Worldwide and brought it to a global audience, I found that my life, too, was better and richer. While working with my own client leadership teams, I started to observe the same

benefits showing up in their lives as they reported their personal and professional good news in sessions. I also started to notice our expanding community of EOS Implementers expressing the same personal satisfaction.

What was going on? I had to find words to articulate what was happening. Suddenly, I realized that all of us were doing what we loved, with people we loved, making a huge difference in the world, being compensated appropriately for the value we were delivering, and having the time to pursue other passions. That was it!

This book provides context for all of the other books in the Traction Library. All of those instructional books provide the means to this end—or, for many of us, a new beginning. Yet *The EOS Life* brings it all together by focusing on how EOS changes not just our businesses but our lives. It reveals the behind-the-scenes story and gives you insights into achieving this lifestyle for yourself. Gino has done a great job articulating benefits that we didn't see or understand in the beginning, and I'm confident that by the time you turn the last page, you'll be eager to start living The EOS Life.

This isn't hype or a pipe dream. This book is a guide to real, deep satisfaction. I invite you to join me in living The EOS Life.

**—Don Tinney, co-founder of EOS Worldwide
and the second EOS Implementer**

THE EOS LIFE

You deserve to live your ideal life.

Sadly, most entrepreneurs and leaders don't. This book was written to change that.

Imagine doing what you love to do every day. What gives you unlimited energy. So much so that you wake up before your alarm clock every morning. Picture doing it with energy and excitement, and with people you really love being around. People who are enjoyable and uplifting. Picture the work you are doing making an impact. The impact *you* want to make, whether it's on the world, your country, state, or community. On your employees, clients/customers, family, friends, or yourself. Also imagine you are being compensated well, making as much money as you want, while also having the time to pursue the other activities you are passionate about in your personal life. That might be hiking, golfing, painting, playing an instrument, reading, bird watching, or traveling. You might like helping your church, doing charitable work, or spending time with friends and family.

This is 100% possible, and I'm about to show you how.

THE QUESTION THAT LAUNCHED THE EOS LIFE

I haven't spent my entire business career living what is now known as The EOS Life. The truth is, I let the busy part of business overtake me so much that I was nowhere near living my ideal life . . . until a brief, piercing conversation added the final piece to the puzzle.

Throughout my twenties I was fortunate enough to have incredible experiences guided by special mentors. I was a sponge for knowledge. I couldn't get enough. I sacrificed almost everything else to learn, grow, and become successful.

Running my dad's business, turning it around, then selling it kept me on my toes and taught me a lot. My dad taught me his years of entrepreneurial experience. My mentor Sam Cupp masterfully showed me how to run a successful business. These lessons pounded through my head day and night. What Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. once said is true: "A mind, once expanded by a new idea, never returns to its former dimensions."

I joined Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO), surrounded myself with fellow entrepreneurs, and absorbed their knowledge, ambitions, and elements of mastery. I was coached by one of my greatest mentors, Dan Sullivan, through whom I discovered my Unique Ability® and the Entrepreneurial Time System®. I studied the teachings of Jim Rohn, Earl

Nightingale, Les Brown, Michael Gerber, Napoleon Hill, Tony Robbins, Stephen Covey, and Brian Tracy. I devoured dozens of books and audio recordings. I also attended countless conferences, seminars, and events.

Literally hundreds of lessons have shaped my thinking and belief system.

From these great teachers and experiences, I developed a philosophy that's a part of my daily Modus Operandi (M.O.): how to function, think, live, breathe, and talk. How to create freedom, maximize my time, and increase my productivity. I learned the risk/reward equation. How to serve people and add value. Equally as important, I learned that it's okay to do what you love and make a lot of money.

This work system made me a great worker, but it left out one vital ingredient: life balance.

Then, in my late twenties, just as I was putting the finishing touches on my operating system, I had a wake-up call—a simple question shifted the way I spend my time.

Early one morning, when my daughter was four years old, I was getting into my car to head off to work. Before I could close the door, she came out of the house and up to the car. I looked down with a big smile and said, “Hi, sweetie.”

Then came the question that changed my life. She asked, “Daddy, are you going home?”

My jaw dropped. I was crushed. “Going home?”

I looked at her and said, “No, Alexis, Daddy lives *here*. I’m going to work.”

What I’d been overlooking hit me like a ton of bricks. Until then I was rarely home, because I worked morning until night.

I committed, right on the spot, to having a more balanced life. That “aha!” moment combined with everything I had learned, and The EOS Life was born. Only I wouldn’t call it that, not yet.

THE HISTORY OF THE EOS LIFE

I had my first glimpse of the personal impact of The EOS Life five years after creating EOS. I was making a decision to rebrand and reposition EOS for marketing purposes. To that end I engaged a high-end marketing firm. They asked for a list of my best clients so they could talk to them and learn what the process was doing for them. Seven hard-charging entrepreneurs were selected from the list, who quickly came to be called “The Magnificent Seven.”

Over the next few weeks, the marketing firm interviewed each of the Magnificent Seven. They then returned with the feedback. Eager to hear the outcome, I expected to hear things like, “Our company is growing faster than ever,” “We are making more profit than ever,” “The chaos we used

to experience is gone,” and “The company is finally running like a Swiss watch.” Those were the results they were experiencing.

But the feedback turned out to be quite different.

The owner of the marketing firm started the meeting by saying, “We have the feedback from each of your clients, and it is eerily similar.” He continued: “Every client, seven out of seven, unanimously said the same thing. Out of the many benefits, they said the number-one result of implementing EOS in their companies was ‘a better quality of life.’”

I was shocked. I didn’t know what to make of this remarkable by-product of the system. And I didn’t consider what “The EOS Life” really meant until almost seven years after that marketing meeting, when my partner, Don Tinney, made its benefits clear.

He talked about the life he and I were living, the life our clients and EOS Implementers were living. He came to call it The EOS Life. Don memorialized the new term when he presented it at one of the quarterly meetings for all of our EOS Implementers. They liked it instantly.

Yet its broader meaning didn’t fully sink in for me. I was still focusing on the business results.

A few years later, I was asked to keynote the first-ever EOS Conference, which has become an annual event for

leaders running their company on EOS. I wasn't quite sure what my topic would be, since all of the attendees already knew all of the EOS tools. I was half asleep in a hotel room in Los Angeles when I had a "Eureka!" moment: "The topic has to be The EOS Life." At 4 AM I got up and wrote out the entire speech. The words flowed like water.

The talk at the EOS Conference was a big hit. I delivered the same keynote speech three years in a row at our annual conferences, each time adding more finishing touches. I figured out how to articulate the full parameters of what The EOS Life was, so it could inspire tens of thousands of people to live their ideal life.

That is the purpose of this book. To give you everything you need to live your ideal life.

I never thought I'd write these words. I never intended to write another EOS book after writing the previous five Traction Library books. Out of the blue, though, on a typical day in the middle of the week, a sense of urgency came over me, and I said to myself, "I need to write the EOS Life book." I hope that it has a tremendous impact on your life.

WHAT IS THE EOS LIFE?

Now that you know how The EOS Life evolved, let's shift to exactly what it is.

The EOS Life is you doing what you love, with people you love, while making a huge difference, being compensated appropriately, and having time for other passions.

This life is absolutely achievable and 100% customizable for who you uniquely are.

First you have to believe you are worthy of living this way. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, sadly, most entrepreneurs don't live their ideal life. Maybe that's because you don't feel you deserve it or are afraid of it, you are too undisciplined, you have some deep-seated, self-destructive psychological disorder, or you simply don't know how. This book will solve all of that. As spiritual teacher and author David R. Hawkins wrote, "The unconscious will allow us to have only what we think we deserve." I'll do everything in my power to convince you that you deserve it, and show you how to get it, but you have to believe you are worthy in order for it to become a reality. And the beauty is, many people will benefit from your achieving this life.

This book will not tell you what you should love to do or who you should do it with. It won't say how much money you should make, what impact you should have on the world, or what your other passions should be. You are in charge of deciding all of that. Instead, this book will create the context that gives you the clarity to make those decisions.

WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

EOS was created to help entrepreneurs. It helps them get everything they want from their business.

So, first and foremost, this book is for entrepreneurs. Yet the opportunity to live The EOS Life will spread far beyond that. This book is for leadership team members, too. It can also have a huge impact on the rest of a company's employees, as well as their families and loved ones.

Another audience for this book is the EOS Implementers around the world. These are successful entrepreneurs who help companies implement EOS. (Some companies self-implement EOS and some use an EOS Implementer to assist them.)

Most of the stories you'll read will be about entrepreneurs, who I'll call "Visionaries" for the rest of this book. But I'll also share examples of the incredible impact of The EOS Life on leadership team members and EOS Implementers. Every one of the stories features real EOS clients, because they were submitted by EOS Implementers.

If you have started implementing EOS in your company, you are already on the path to enjoying these benefits. Just like the Magnificent Seven that shared why they love EOS, tens of thousands of companies are now sharing in the benefits of The EOS Life. Now you need to understand the tools on a much deeper level, so that you can live your ideal life to the fullest.

EOS has specific tools, disciplines, and philosophies that will guide you toward The EOS Life. This book breaks out those individual tools in different chapters, so that you can clearly understand how to use them. By helping you grasp how these business tools affect you personally, it will help you move the needle faster toward living your ideal life.

I subscribe to Buckminster Fuller’s belief: “If you want to teach people a new way of thinking, don’t bother trying to teach them. Instead, give them a tool, the use of which will lead to new ways of thinking.”

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

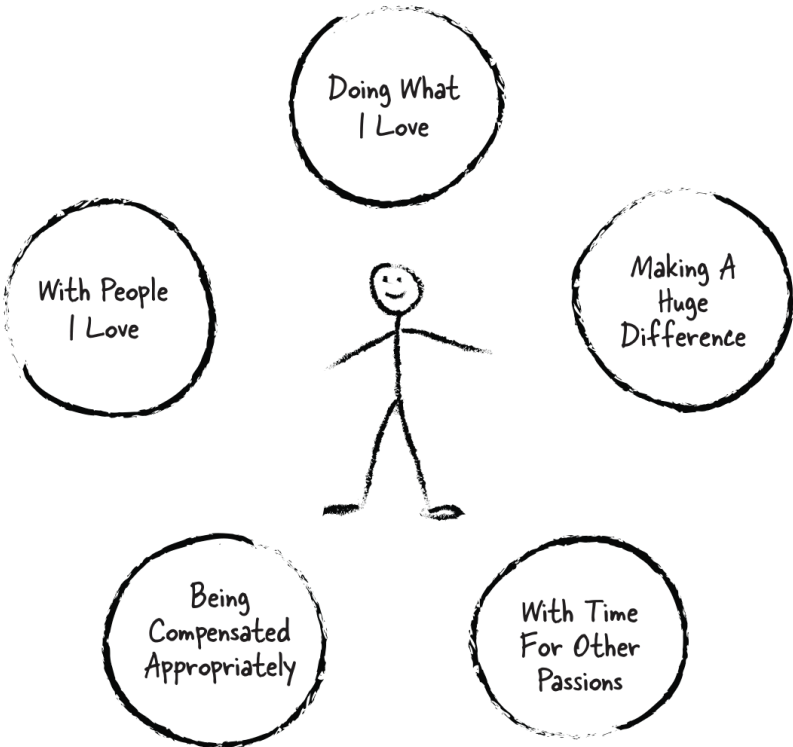
First, you must understand the five major points of The EOS Life:

1. Doing what you love
2. With people you love
3. Making a huge difference
4. Being compensated appropriately
5. With time for other passions

We’ll dive into each of those points, chapter by chapter. Each chapter will have questions to answer and actions to take. Please use a journal while reading this book, or write in the blank pages provided at the end of each chapter. You can also purchase The EOS Life Journal/Planner at eoslife.com, which was created to be the perfect complement to this book. When you write down what you’re learning, you’ll

better anchor those points in your mind. Also, countless studies have shown how much more effective it is to write by hand than type. You retain more, you spark your creativity, and you learn more. Once you finish this book, I urge you to review your journal/notes every quarter going forward.

Let's begin your journey by drawing the following EOS Life Model in your journal:



Drawing the above model in your journal will start bringing The EOS Life into fruition for yourself. If you haven't

figured it out yet, that's you in the center. Think about how you can live what's in those five circles every single day.

Once you have finished reading the book, we'll return to this model to gauge where you are on your journey.

At the end of this book, I added a special bonus "mini-book" that will teach you a way to harness, manage, and expand your energy. The mini-book contains 10 disciplines that are the perfect complement to The EOS Life. I've been living by The 10 Disciplines for more than 20 years with great success. You might find them to be a pleasant surprise and highly valuable, as many have.

Let's move to the next step in your journey by diving into the first point of living The EOS Life: doing what you love.

Chapter 1

DOING WHAT YOU LOVE

“Where your talents and the needs of the world cross, lies your calling, vocation, purpose.”

—Aristotle

You have a genetic encoding that is unique to you. You have a talent or superpower. You have a personal sweet spot. There is something that you love to do and that you are great at doing. You are passionate about it. It is your purpose.

Your job is to figure out exactly what that is. And once you are clear on it, you should spend all of your working time doing it.

What kind of work do you love to do?

Take Five: Please take a few minutes right now and ponder this question. Write down in your journal everything that comes to mind. Do you like solving problems, working with clients, leading people, creating products or services?

Then rate yourself on a scale of 1–10. How close you are to doing what you love 100% of your working time? Ten is the highest. That's the ultimate goal.

You must avoid trying to be all things to all people, trying to do it all, trying to be good at everything. All greatness comes from focusing. If you are like most people, you're trying to do everything. You're trying to be everything. Well, you're never going to be great if that is the case. Figure out that one thing that you were put here to do, focus on it, and you will be happy, fulfilled, and energized.

To paraphrase a popular saying, the two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.

This soul-searching could possibly lead you to realize that you're in the wrong business. That was the case with Todd Sachse of Sachse Construction Company, who started out with a maid service company and a window-washing business. After a few years he realized he didn't love the business of "cleaning toilets," as he describes it. He sold those businesses once he realized his passion for the construction

industry. He has since built a \$200 million general contracting company and does what he loves every day.

Sometimes the soul-searching leads to a career change, like a lawyer in Chicago who became an attorney because that's what his family wanted him to do. He hated it. He later found his love for real estate sales, and he's now one of the top realtors in Illinois.

Sometimes you merely need to tweak your job description, like the Visionary business owner who delegated all of her finance-department responsibilities to free herself up to do what she loved.

Regardless of what you discover, it's vital you discover it.

In each chapter, after I explain the corresponding point, I then share the EOS tool or tools that will help you live that particular point in The EOS Life. Let's begin with the first one.

THE EOS TOOL THAT MAKES THIS HAPPEN

The tool that helps you discover what you love to do is called Delegate and Elevate. You may know the tool already, but if not, here's a refresher, because it's the ultimate tool for helping you to determine your personal sweet spot.

Start by listing everything you do at work. Typically, you'll draw up a laundry list of at least 20 things. Take a few

minutes right now. Write “Laundry List” at the top of your journal page and list everything, like checking email, meetings, solving employee issues, paperwork, talking to customers, and so forth. List everything work related that you do all day, every day.

Next, copy the following tool in your journal. Take up the entire page so you have room to write.

Now, put each of your laundry list items into one of the four quadrants. Let’s start with the worst of the bunch. In the bottom right-hand quadrant, write everything that you don’t like to do and you’re not good at doing. We all do some of those things.

Next, in the bottom left-hand quadrant, write all the things you don’t like to do, but you’re good at. This is most people’s personal hell. They have a job that they’re good at but don’t like doing, and they don’t know how to get out. This purgatory for you may include jobs like handling customer service problems, managing people, running meetings, doing paperwork, or managing inventory.

Now let’s get to the good stuff. In the top right-hand quadrant, place all the things that you like to do and you’re good at. Not such a bad place to be. You don’t necessarily spring out of bed to do these tasks, but you don’t mind doing them. They are enjoyable to you.

DELEGATE AND ELEVATE™

Love Doing It and
Great at Doing It

Like Doing It and
Good at Doing It

Don't Like Doing It and
Good at Doing It

Don't Like Doing It and
Not Good at Doing It

Left for last are the things you love to do and are great at doing—your genetic encoding. Put them in the top left-hand quadrant. Typically, you'll only list two, three, four, maybe five things. Not a lot.

The typical Visionary loves jobs like research and development of products and services, building relationships, creative problem solving, selling, spending time with customers or clients, focusing on growth, building culture, strategic planning, and coming up with ideas.

As a result of this exercise, you will realize that you are doing a lot of things you should not be doing. For a typical Visionary, these might include managing people, running day-to-day operations, holding people accountable, following through with projects, following up on details, paperwork, checking emails, or anything administrative. Your job is to “delegate” everything in the bottom quadrants and “elevate” yourself to the jobs in the top quadrants.

Yet you won't always delegate things. Sometimes you merely need to stop doing them altogether. Are they really necessary? What if no one did them? If they don't benefit the company very much, just stop doing them.

For some, this process of delegating and elevating is freeing. For others, it causes guilt or the feeling that you lack the worthiness to free yourself.

Whatever emotions it prompts for you, identifying your tasks is a great first step toward personal freedom, happiness, and higher productivity and impact.

Yet this is only the beginning. The process of moving toward doing what you love to do all day, every day, is a journey. You're not going to finish this exercise today and enjoy The EOS Life tomorrow, but you're going to be one step closer.

Trixie Whyte is the passionate Visionary of Q2 HR Solutions Group of Companies, one of the largest HR services companies in the Philippines. Before EOS, Trixie was buried in the weeds of her company, constantly pulled in all directions.

After running her business on EOS for a year, she built a structure that allowed her to create an opening for a strong Integrator, Sarah McLeod. (Integrators are the people who run the day-to-day business: presidents, COOs, general managers, etc.). With Sarah in her new role, Trixie was able to delegate and elevate. She gave Sarah control over all of the details involved in running daily operations. This freed Trixie up to spend all of her time on big ideas and relationships, building the company culture, uplifting lives, and growing the business. She is doing what she loves.

Or, let's look at an Integrator, Robby Hagelstein. He is a second-generation leader of URS Medical, which takes care of individuals who need longer-term medical supplies and equipment, as well as mothers who need breast pumps. Robby had taken over running the family business and his dad had

moved up to the Visionary role. At first, he thought he had to “do it all,” not only to prove to his dad that he could run the company, but also to prove to the employees that he was worthy of filling his dad’s shoes. Yet once he implemented EOS, he realized that he was holding the company back and instead needed to focus on his strengths.

Once he filled out the Delegate and Elevate tool, he achieved clarity. He met with his leadership team, which then consisted of his dad and two brothers-in-law, and discussed what must come off his plate. The two biggies were handling the company finances and dealing with medical insurance companies. They had a young man in the company with the potential to do the delegated jobs, and they offered him the responsibilities. He took the job and knocked it out of the park, quickly earning his way onto the leadership team. Robby was freed up to do what he was good at—running a business and executing strategy. The company is doing better than ever, and Robby continues to delegate other things as the company grows.

Remember, you’re trying to move the needle. Make progress toward being in your sweet spot. Some people have a lightbulb moment and make massive changes quickly, and others make steady progress over time. Either track is okay, as long as you are moving in the right direction.

It is amazing to watch the impact that delegating and elevating has on a person, when they realize what they love to

do and then give themselves the freedom to do it. Here are a few more examples.

A CFO realized she did not love her role and responsibilities (finance, IT, HR, office management). She also realized that her head of accounting had the skillset, capacity, and passion to take the role, so they swapped. (This was a shocker for everyone in the company.) Now they are both incredibly productive and love their new jobs.

Or an incredible salesperson was promoted to sales manager, only to realize she absolutely hated managing people. As a result, she stepped down, got back to selling full time, and became the top-producing salesperson.

Or the EOS client who realized that, while he loved his company, becoming an EOS Implementer was his true calling. As a result, he sold his company and began helping many other firms become successful.

I could list thousands of these transformational stories. But let's spend a little extra time on one particular type—a Visionary who finally spends all of their time doing what they love.

They typically don't start out that way. Usually, a wild and crazy entrepreneur starts a company and builds it through brute force and sheer will. As the company expands, they find themselves buried in the day-to-day details, doing things

they don't love. They work morning till night. They are burnt out, tired, and miserable.

Along comes EOS, which supplies the lightbulb moment that helps them discover what they love to do. They then find their perfect Integrator to run the day-to-day. They build a leadership team to delegate everything that isn't in their personal sweet spot. By shedding those tasks, they free themselves to grow the company to the next level.

I should point out that, at first, such a Visionary often experiences a feeling of being “put out to pasture.” Releasing the reins is a blow to their ego and perceived value. They are no longer the superhero who always saves the day. But once those psychological issues subside, the feeling of freedom blossoms. The Visionary rediscovers the reason they started the company. The company then takes off for the next stage of success.

DELEGATE ONE THING PER QUARTER

With your Delegate and Elevate tool filled out, your next job is to delegate everything in the bottom two quadrants and elevate yourself to the top two quadrants. How quickly you do this is up to you. The best way to measure your progress is to review it every quarter. Every 90 days you must delegate at least one item from the bottom two quadrants to ultimately free yourself to concentrate only on the top two quadrants, your true skill set.

I've been delegating one thing per quarter for 30 years. After a while it gets tricky finding things to delegate because you're offloading only good stuff. It got so good for me that to free my energy, I had to delegate the ownership of an entire company. Once I realized that the responsibilities of owning EOS Worldwide had become a distraction from the things I really loved to do (writing books, creating content, helping entrepreneurs), I decided to sell the company.

Once you compile your laundry list of activities—the “stuff” you're doing with all of your working time—you can see more clearly which ones fit in your sweet spot. That's the stuff you were born to do. It's like a block of marble waiting to be sculpted. As the common axiom goes, the sculpture is already complete within the marble block—you just have to chisel away the superfluous material.

It's time for you to chip away all of the unnecessary “marble” so you can fully realize your genetic encoding.

At EOS Worldwide, the process is made deliberate. Every EOS Implementer is taught that once they have 10 clients, they should hire a part-time assistant. This assistant does everything that is not in the EOS Implementer's top left-hand quadrant. Things like managing email, scheduling, ordering materials, all paperwork, reporting, booking travel, bookkeeping, and session setup and preparation. This frees the EOS Implementer to find additional clients, manage client sessions, communicate with clients, and continue their

education so they can master their craft and provide further value to their clients.

Think of it as a journey. Once you delegate everything in the bottom two quadrants, you should delegate everything in the top right. You should be spending all of your time in the top left-hand quadrant. This is your personal sweet spot: the ultimate goal, doing the stuff you love and are great at doing 100% of your working time.

As I mentioned, Dan Sullivan has been one of my greatest mentors. I have been a student of the Strategic Coach® program he founded for 23 years. He has had a profound impact on me as a business owner, entrepreneur, and Visionary, and has helped over 20,000 entrepreneurs. Dan calls this sweet spot your Unique Ability®. He believes that the definition of your life's purpose is “infinitely expanding your unique ability through greater personal freedom.” He thinks it is vital that you get rid of what exhausts you and replace it with what energizes you.

Think about the activities that give you energy. Only you can decide this—no one can decide for you. If someone else did, they could have an ulterior motive, or at least a bias. Likewise, when you move toward your Unique Ability, make sure that positive emotions are driving you and not negative emotions. Heed the warning of the great motivational speaker, Les Brown: “Too many of us are not living our dream because we are living our fears.”

As you begin to delegate and elevate, you may feel guilty because you don't feel it's right to dump that "crappy" stuff you don't like to do on other people. Well, we all love to do different things, and you likely know people who love doing at least some of the stuff you don't like to do. Don't rob others of the chance to do their top-quadrant work just because it's in your lower quadrants. Think of it as a win-win situation.

For some, all of this make sense. But they are unwilling to hire someone to delegate to, either because they are afraid to spend the money, don't think they can afford it, or are too cheap. Well, it is simple math. When you free yourself up to do the things you love, you typically grow faster, earn more money, and become able to afford it. I have found that it is a five-to-one ratio: for every dollar I spend on someone to free me up, I earn \$5 in additional productivity, output, or revenue generation.

What also might happen is that you will need to have a tough conversation with someone who is *preventing* you from delegating and elevating. You have to address the people who are forcing, shaming, or manipulating you to stay in the bottom two quadrants. You need to confront them, otherwise you'll never be free.

In some cases, a Visionary may be held back by an Integrator who is resentful that their counterpart gets to have so much fun helping clients, while they are stuck in the day-to-day business. Or a VP of Operations wants to spend more time managing people and working on process

improvement to run a better department, but the Visionary owner is a controlling, stubborn micro-manager who refuses to allow one more person to be hired in Operations to free up the VP.

When one person is not letting you fully flourish, you need to discuss this with them. Prepare well, schedule the meeting, and then very directly state the issue and your proposed solution. You must help them see how they are holding back not just you, but also the entire company, from the next level of growth.

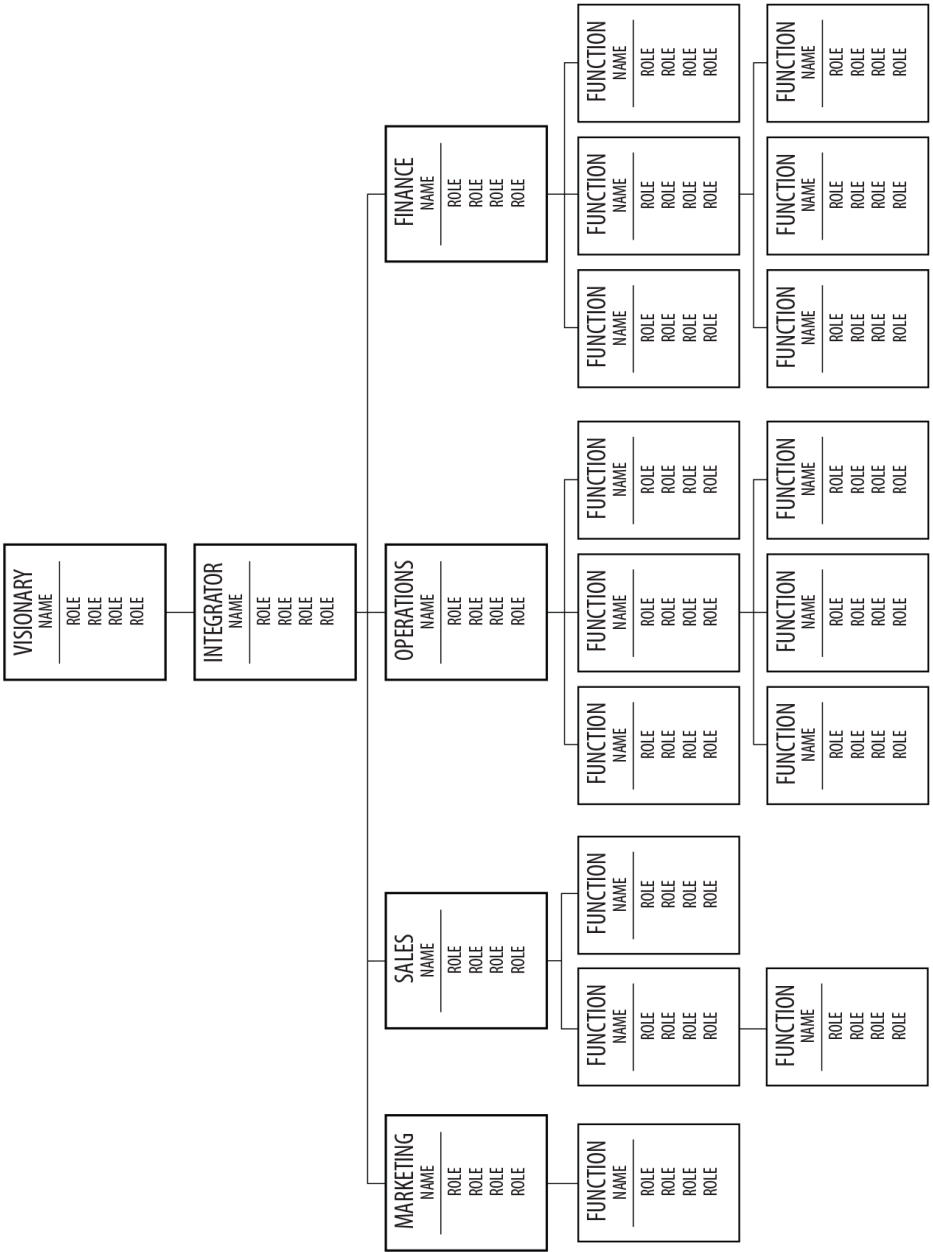
This direct discussion usually solves the problem. Your typical obstacle is being bold enough to have the conversation. Colleagues often don't even realize they are holding you back and will respect you for addressing the issue. But don't just vent; bring a plan for them to consider.

THE ACCOUNTABILITY CHART

Delegate and Elevate is the first EOS tool for living your ideal life. The second tool is the Accountability Chart. This tool helps you determine the right structure for your organization, crystallizes roles and responsibilities, and clarifies who reports to who—basically a supercharged organizational chart.

When complete, it looks something like this.

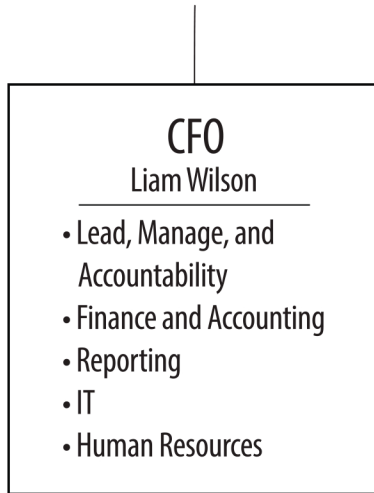
Once your Accountability Chart is complete, each function with its roles is a “seat” that needs to be filled. While



there are many benefits of the Accountability Chart in the greater context of EOS (right structure, reporting, roles and responsibilities), the Accountability Chart in the context of The EOS Life has just one goal: the seat you occupy on the chart must reflect your personal sweet spot. If you are the Visionary, make sure your function and your roles reflect that. The same applies if you are the head of marketing, VP of operations, a customer service representative, or whatever function. For example:



If you are the CFO, here's what your seat might look like:



Why will using this tool help you achieve The EOS Life?

By clearly understanding the Delegate and Elevate tool, delegating something every quarter, and ensuring your Accountability Chart seat is a perfect match for you, you will move the needle faster.

Understanding and implementing this first point of The EOS Life—doing what you love—is the main ingredient in the recipe. Each of the following points of The EOS Life will build on each other. As we add the other ingredients, they will expedite the process of your doing what you love and greatly magnify its benefits.

A large rectangular box with a thin black border, containing 25 horizontal lines for writing. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across most of the width of the box, leaving a small margin on the left and right sides. The box is empty, ready for text input.

ACTION STEPS

Grab your journal or use the following Notes pages. Please write your answers to these questions:

1. How close are you to doing what you love 100% of your working time?
2. What would it look like to be at 100%?
3. Why aren't you there yet?
4. What would it take to get to 100%?

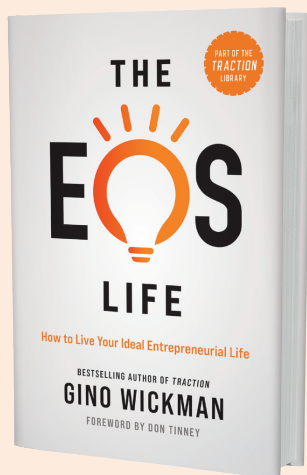
Write down one thing that you will do in the next seven days to advance you toward doing what you love. You might complete the Delegate and Elevate exercise for the first time. You might pick what to delegate this quarter. You might have a tough conversation with someone holding you back. What will move the needle for you?

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FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND LEADERSHIP TEAMS

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