

GET UNSTUCK

**THE
BLUEPRINT**
Companion Workbook

6 Practical Steps to Lift
Your Leadership to New Heights

DOUGLAS CONANT WITH AMY FEDERMAN

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Welcome to The Blueprint Workbook

Use this companion workbook as a space to record your answers to the various prompts and exercises included in *The Blueprint: 6 Practical Steps to Lift Your Leadership to New Heights*.

How to use this workbook

In *The Blueprint*, there are actual exercises embedded within the pages of the book. It's perfectly fine (and even encouraged) to mark up the book itself but many readers and leaders want a separate space to record their insights, answers, and epiphanies. That's what this workbook is for. Use it record your reflections and store your Post-it® Notes.

You might notice the exercises included here are truncated versions of the exercises that appear in the book; they don't include all the rich examples and stories that support the reflection prompts in *The Blueprint*. Here, you will only find the essential information needed to prompt your thinking and space to record your musings. Since this isn't a replacement for the full text, make sure to have your copy of *The Blueprint* handy when using this workbook. This is a trusty companion, not a proxy.

What you need

- Your copy of *The Blueprint*
- Pen or Pencil
- Post-it Notes

What are the Post-its for?

As you work your way through the six steps in the Blueprint, you are urged to use Post-it notes along the way to record your key thoughts and takeaways.

There is a "Notes" page at the end of each section in this workbook. Use this space to record your "epiphanies"—all the notes, ideas, questions, words, and inspirational tidbits that occurred to you during the completion of the exercises in the corresponding sections. Write down each meaningful word, thought, idea, practice, or phrase on its own Post-it and stick it right there on the "Notes" page.

By the time you're through, you will have collected quite a few "Post-it epiphanies" and they will be instrumental in the development of your leadership model prototype.

Forget Perfection

Remember:

“ Don't let 'perfect' become the enemy of 'good.' ”

As you work through the exercises and prompts in the Blueprint process, it is essential to remember to aim for **progress not perfection**.

Part of the problem today's professionals face is that they are overwhelmed by expectations. They are beset with a deluge of competing priorities, awash with many looming “to dos,” and they have a litany of unfulfilled wishes to boot. It's all too much. When you look at the giant list of your goals and aspirations all at once, it becomes too daunting.

Many leaders say they feel stuck. When we dig a little deeper, we often discover it's because they don't want to start something new unless they can do it *perfectly*. But perfection is an unattainable myth; it can keep you from getting better by creating expectations that are so lofty and unrealistic that they end up giving you an excuse to stay where you are.

To combat this stifling perfectionism, you need an iterative approach that starts small, is broken down into practical steps, and that can always be improved upon but never has to be perfect or “finished.” Because guess what? Your life will never be perfect, the conditions will never be just right, and your growth as a person will never be finished. That's just not the way things work.

You don't have to wait for the “right” time. You can start where you are, with what you have within you. And you can start small. You already have the raw materials to change your leadership life.

Treat this as an incremental and iterative journey. As you go through the exercises, don't belabor making your responses *perfect*. They don't have to be fine-tuned like a precision instrument; merely *thinking* about these questions is stimulating growth. Try to get through it relatively quickly knowing you'll go through it again.

After you've worked through the six steps once, you'll be ready to work through them repeatedly throughout your lifetime, continuously honing, improving, and reaching higher. You'll find it will become second nature to progress through the steps, and it will go more quickly each time around. It's simple – but not easy. Hard work – but well worth it. Aspirational – but also approachable. Let's go!

Your Foundation Is Everything

(Page 5 in The Blueprint)

In the world at large, a blueprint is a tool for bringing to life the dreams of an architect. The six-step Blueprint process is a tool for bringing to life the dreams of leaders.

A quick primer on your Foundation

Ask any good structural engineer and they'll tell you that the trick to building a soaring skyscraper is laying a deep foundation. The taller the structure you want to build, the stronger and deeper the foundation you will need. Without a sturdy foundation, a tall building can topple under its own weight and may not be able to withstand high winds. If the foundation is not deep and strong, the building will not be able to weather the inevitable storms to come.

The same thing is true in leadership. The leaders who succeed have a sturdy and secure Foundation that tethers them to their beliefs and values, keeps them connected to their unique personality, characteristics, and temperament, and allows them to put their skill set to work in the most productive way. The stronger a leader's foundation, the higher they can reach towards their goals. Using the six-step Blueprint you will design a leadership Foundation that can withstand almost anything.

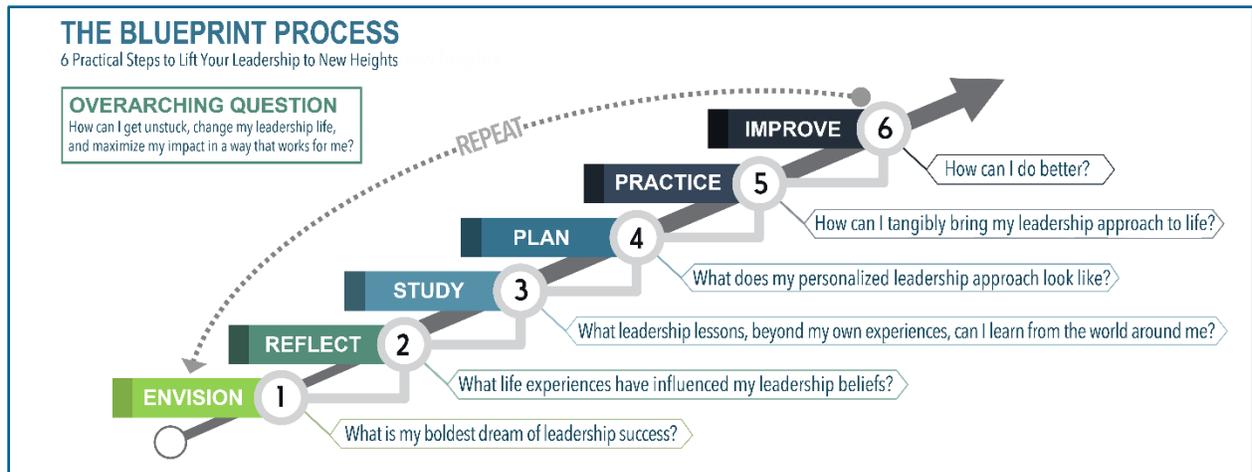
Your Foundation is **what** you will create. The Blueprint is **how** you will create it.

What will it look like?

Using guided prompts for reflection and study, you will excavate the raw materials of your Foundation:

- *Your Leadership Purpose* – the reason you choose to lead
- *Your Leadership Beliefs* – the thinking that governs your approach to influencing others
- *Your Leadership Model* – a personalized expression of your leadership beliefs, purpose, and skills
- *Your Leadership Practice Treasury* – a suite of behaviors that brings your model to life
- *Your Leadership Improvement Plan* – a list of focus areas and key actions to jumpstart your lifetime of continuous improvement

The Six Steps



To build your Foundation, there are six practical steps.

Step 1. ENVISION: Reach High

First, you have to set the intention to do better and Envision what success looks like to you – to reach high.

Step 2. REFLECT: Dig Deep

Next, you will Reflect on your experiences to uncover your leadership beliefs, to dig deep into what makes you, you.

Step 3. STUDY: Lay the Groundwork

Next, you will Study, to fill in all the cracks from your dig, laying the groundwork with all the learnings and insights from the world that exists beyond your own experiences.

Step 4. PLAN: Design

This is the fun part. Using design thinking as well as prompts, Post-its, pen and paper, you get to conceive your Plan – an exquisite design for your personal Leadership Model, derived from your Leadership Purpose and your Leadership Beliefs.

Step 5. PRACTICE: Build

Here you will build Practice into your change process. You will brainstorm small steps—little actionable practices—that you can fold into your habits.

Step 6. IMPROVE: Reinforce

Finally, you Improve, continually learning from what you did right, and what you could have done better, reinforcing the strength of your Foundation in perpetuity.

Your Life Story Is Your Leadership

Story *(Page 17 in The Blueprint)*

Your life and your leadership are not separate; they are part of the same story, written on the same parchment, unfolding simultaneously. How will you write that story? This chapter gets you started.

EXERCISE IN THIS CHAPTER:

HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR LEADERSHIP STORY

Highlights of Your Leadership Story

In this exercise, you'll begin to gain a better understanding of what makes you, you. Then you will use that information to Envision a fulfilling path for your life and leadership.

Getting started

Think about the most important aspects of your life and leadership story thus far. Since there is a rich tapestry of experiences and influences that have brought you to this point in your life and career, consider this exercise as a reflection on your personal “highlight reel.” Have fun with it, be open-minded, and try not to get hung up on judgmental thoughts about what you “should” include. There aren't any right or wrong answers. Anything goes.

Key Questions

If you close your eyes and let your mind go for a minute or two, what stands out most vividly to you in your life thus far?

Imagine your mind is a fly buzzing around in the air but constantly finding new surfaces to land on. What memories does your mind “land” on over and over again? These might be momentous occasions, like having to change schools as a kid, going to college, winning an award, getting married, changing careers, or witnessing the birth of your children. Or your mind might land on other highlights entirely: the first time you spoke in

Now focus on this:

How did changes or events in your personal life affect your leadership journey and vice versa? Did you ever have to make a big move to a new place? Did you ever have to make a sacrifice for a family member? Did a crisis or life-altering event ever knock you down at some point only for you to come back from it with more resilience? Write down your recollection of three big **changes** that have affected your life. It's fine if there is some overlap with things you have already written down.

Change 1:

Change 2:

Change 3:

So far . . .

Which parts of your story have felt most fulfilling, or yielded unexpected revelations about your character or belief systems? Did you ever surprise yourself by doing something selfless or courageous? Conversely, can you think of a time when you wish you had acted with more bravery but didn't? What did these experiences show you about who you are and what you believe?

Write down everything that comes to mind.

If this exercise begins to feel self-indulgent or uncomfortable, good. Lean in. Remember, your story is special and unique. It's what makes you, you. The story that has shaped you is always with you and will have a profound impact on how you live and lead in the real world. Now, in an effort to synthesize some key takeaways from all of this thinking, try to think of the top 5 to 7 things you would feel moved to share as defining parts of your leadership story to someone who has never met you before and is completely unfamiliar with your life.

Use the numbered spaces to share each “highlight” in a sentence or two.

Highlight 1:

Highlight 2:

Highlight 3:

Highlight 4:

Highlight 5:

Highlight 6:

Highlight 7:

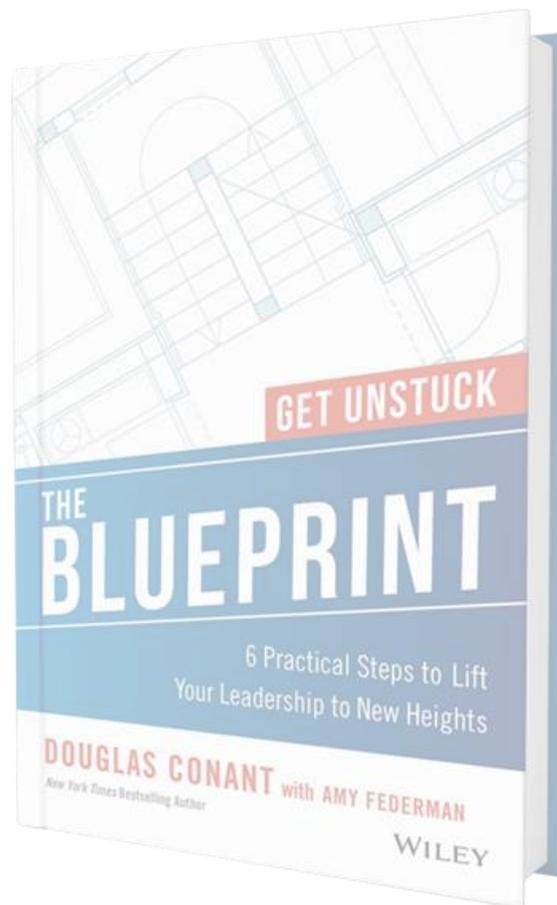
Wrapping Up the Exercise

Nice job. You’ve completed your first exercise in *The Blueprint*. This was a preview of the types of exercises you will do in the six steps.

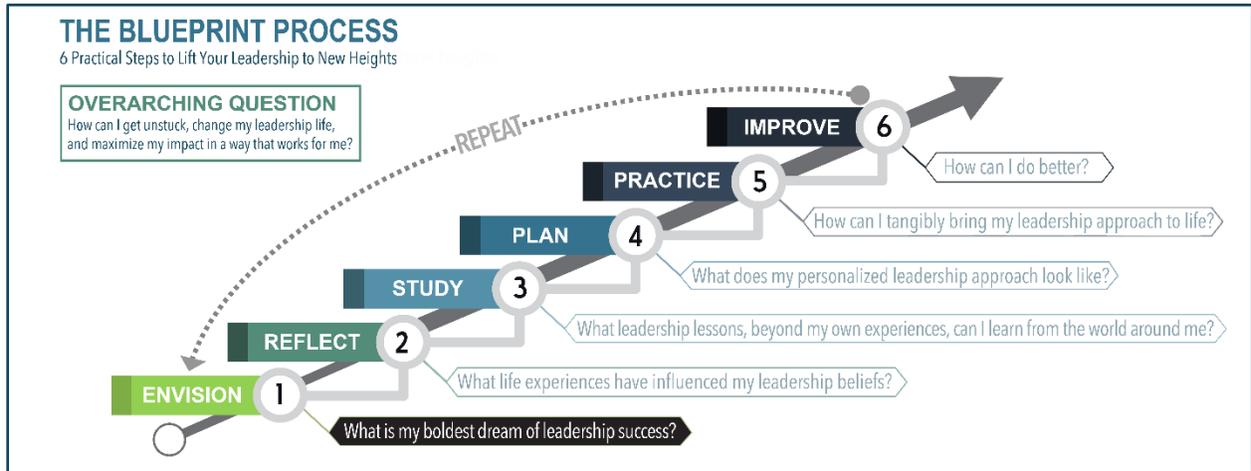
Now that you’ve taken an important first step to start your Blueprint journey, the next step will help you envision the life you wish to create. You will reflect on your values, answer the first three questions of leadership, and write a first working draft of your purpose.

NOTES – Page for Post-It Epiphanies

Use this space to compile your post-its epiphanies: all the important words, concepts, thoughts, ideas, inspirations, or musings from the previous section. Stick them right here on the page.



Step 1: ENVISION – The Power of Intention and Purpose *(Page 31 in The Blueprint)*



The first step in the Blueprint is to Envision your leadership future, to reach high and set an anchoring intention for your journey. This chapter helps you understand the power of intention and articulate your Purpose.

EXERCISES IN THIS CHAPTER:

THE FIRST THREE QUESTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

MY PURPOSE IS

ENVISION

The First Three Questions of Leadership *(page 38 in The Blueprint)*

In many of the exercises of the Blueprint, you will be asked to use your head to think about the way the world works. But building your Foundation requires that you use both your head and your heart. We call the following exercises “questions of the heart” because they are more personal and probative but are essential to developing your purpose and envisioning your path.

Question 1: Why Do I Choose Leadership? *(Page 39 in The Blueprint)*

Think carefully about these prompts:

- How do you want to spend your leadership life?
- What is the work you feel called to do?
- What is your dream?
- How do you want to leverage your special gifts and interests to make the world a better place?
- What does “improving the world” look like to you?
- What is your quest?
- What inspires you?
- What are you working toward?
- What are 2 to 5 things you would want someone to say about you in your eulogy?
- What is the legacy you want to leave?

Write down everything that comes to mind.

Now, try to summarize the fruits of that exercise into a sentence or two using the next prompt. It doesn't have to be perfect. You can revisit and change it indefinitely. This is just to help your purpose begin to take shape.

I choose leadership because:

Question 2: What Is My Promise? *(Page 42 in The Blueprint)*

Doug's Purpose:

“ I intend to help build high-trust, high-performance teams that honor people, defy the critics, and thrive in the face of adversity.”

Doug's purpose encompasses a **promise** (what you can expect from him) and his **values** (how he chooses to walk in the world). This question adds texture to your reason for leading because it helps you connect with your promise: what you can deliver. Here, investigate the parts of yourself that you are proud of. This also helps you understand your standards what you expect from others and what they can expect from you.

Think about these prompts:

- What makes me different?
- How do I stand apart from my contemporaries and colleagues?
- What qualities am I not willing to compromise on?
- What parts of my personality do I leverage most in my leadership?

Anything goes here. You might note that you are driven, resilient, fair, judicious, relentless, ambitious, whatever qualities you notice underscoring your efforts in a positive way.

For example, one thing that found its way into Doug's purpose statement was the ability to thrive in the face of adversity. The part of his personality that ability references is “grit” and “ability to perform under pressure,” both qualities that he developed as a competitive athlete. The words themselves are special and resonant to him as they were inspired by a famous quote from one of his personal heroes, Teddy Roosevelt. You may land on something completely different. Do you find you can manage a lot of egos because you are good at making everybody feel heard? Can you problem-solve on demand because of your mental agility?

Whatever comes to mind, write it down. You're not boasting; you're self-assessing with a positive orientation rather a critical one.

Write down everything that comes to mind.

Question 3: What Are My Values? *(Page 43 in The Blueprint)*

To diagnose your values, you have to think back on your life and career thus far.

Consider these prompts carefully.

- Can you think of times where you took a principled stance even though it might have been risky, inconvenient, or even damaging to your career?
- Can you think of times you feel certain you behaved with integrity even when it was very challenging to do so: examples in which you went against the grain, had an uncomfortably candid conversation, or defended an unpopular decision?

It's worth devoting significant mental and emotional energy to reflecting on these moments; they hold the key to the values that define the way you choose to walk in the world. It was in those moments when you bravely spoke up that you revealed what matters to you, even if you weren't consciously aware of it at the time.

Contemplate: In those moments, what was the principle at play? What did you feel so strongly was worth defending that you knew it was worth the discomfort?

Now, think about a time when you know you could have taken a stand but you didn't. Why didn't you? What were the consequences? As you carefully examine your views about these moments, a clearer picture of your values will come into focus. When you're done, try to summarize your thinking by writing down as many values as you can.

At the least, aim to brainstorm 5 to 7 of your most essential values. They don't have to relate directly to work; they simply must capture the very best of what you expect from others, and from yourself.

For each, try to write the value and a brief explanation of what that value means to you. For example, you might write something like "One of my values is 'following through' because I always do my best when I keep this in mind." Or, "I value candor because in the past, I have alienated my peers by holding things back."

If that format doesn't work for you, your brainstorm can be a bulleted list, a bunch of run-on sentences, or just a short paragraph. Just like with all the exercises and prompts in The Blueprint, perfection is not the goal. Use the words "My Values Are" to guide your thinking.

My Values Are:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

Purpose *(Page 47 in The Blueprint)*

Now comes the fun (but hardest) part.

Consider:

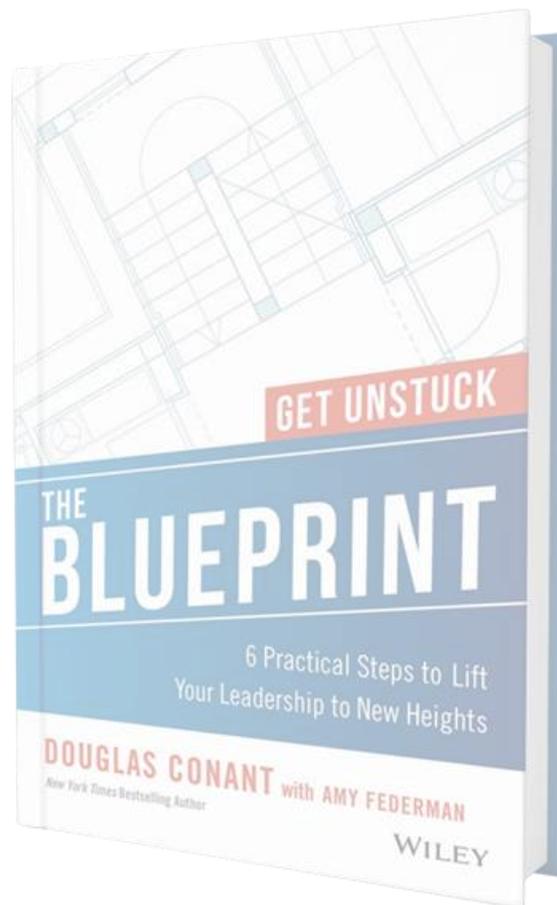
- Why you choose to lead
- What you can promise
- Your values

Take a stab at a rough draft of a purpose statement that hits all three of those cylinders in some fashion. You won't get it right on the first try. But you'll be in a good position to make it better. Use the words "My Purpose Is" to guide your thinking.

My Purpose Is:

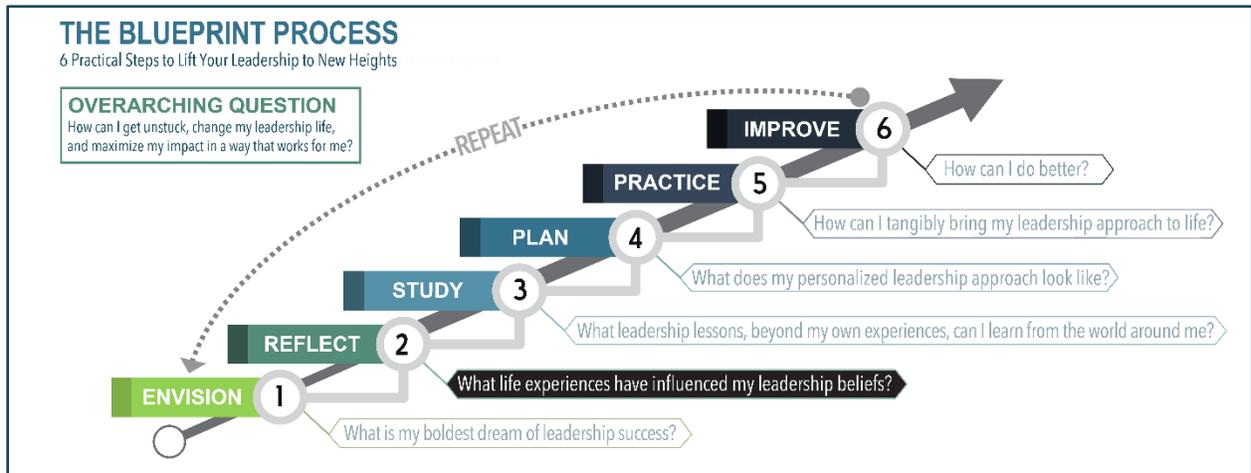
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Step 2: REFLECT – Dig Deep

(Page 51 in The Blueprint)



In the **Reflect** step, using the thinking you did in Step 1 as a springboard, you will work to uncover your leadership beliefs and to dig deep into what makes you, you. Here you will uncover the life lessons that anchor your leadership, and develop a deeper understanding of your unique personality, motivations, temperament, and skill set.

EXERCISES IN THIS CHAPTER:

TWO REFLECTION QUESTIONS

LEADERSHIP WORDS

LEADERSHIP BELIEFS

Question 1: What Motivates People to Give Their Best?

(page 54 in The Blueprint)

To understand how to motivate others, first think about what has motivated you on your own journey. Reflecting on your own experiences – on what propels *you* forward and inspires you to take action – will help you extract insights that can help you motivate others.

Think about your answers to these prompts:

When were you most driven in your life and/or career?

Was it when you were chasing a bonus or raise, when you were seeking the respect of a mentor or superior, or perhaps when you were perplexed by an intricate problem that needed solving?

Maybe you were most motivated when you received some hard-won praise, or when you helped other members of your team reach or surpass a tough target.

Write down what comes to mind.

Are you more driven by external motivation like recognition or reward or by the internal satisfaction of a job well done or helping others?

One is not better than the other. This is a nonjudgmental exercise intended to help you take a clear-eyed look at what motivates you. Try not to “should” yourself to death, lamenting that you “should” have more intrinsic motivation or vice versa. This is just an excavation. Don’t place a value judgment on what you find.

Do you respond best to lots of explicit direction or do you perform best when you’re given free reign and loose guidelines?

Write down everything that comes to mind.

Looking Externally

You will find that what motivates you may not always be what motivates other people. So, now, expand your reflection to the people around you. Thinking about the other people on your team or in your life, consider the following prompts.

What motivates the people closest to you in your life – your friends, family, closest colleagues?

When have you observed other people being most invigorated by a challenge or most propelled to exceed expectations?

In your leadership experience, what have people responded to strongly and positively? What actions have you taken that got people fired up to deliver their best performance?

As you reflect on this, you will find a multitude of things that motivate you and others, but try to identify the most significant motivators. Keep a list of things that stand out. Notice how and when there are points of synergy between what you find motivating and the values you brainstormed in Step 1: Envision.

Flipping the Coin

Next, think about the other side of the motivation coin. Reflect on the times when you have seen the people with whom you work pulling away or becoming disengaged.

What makes them react negatively? Do they respond poorly to too much pressure, to a fear of failure, or an absence of sufficiently challenging tasks?

Write down everything that comes to mind. Good, bad, ugly, inspired, fantastic.

Later, you'll synthesize all these nuggets of wisdom into a more cohesive leadership model. But for now, things will still be malleable and unformed. Based on this exercise, try to summarize what you think primarily drives people.

Based on your responses to your prompts and all your experiences thus far, if you were going to tell another leader how to motivate people to give their very best, what would be your top 5 to 7 pieces of advice?

Write this down however you want. It could be a short list of two-word statements (e.g., Be Kind, Always Listen), or it could be a longer, more substantial synopsis explaining your thinking. Just make sure you save it so you can refer back to it and add to it whenever the inspiration strikes.

Question 2: How Do You Influence People to Deliver Consistently High Performance in an Inconsistent World?

(page 61 in The Blueprint)

This question goes beyond exploring the motivation behind performance and asks you to think about successful practices and tactics for influencing others. It drills down on specifics and gets more into the nitty-gritty.

Think about these prompts:

- What have you learned from big wins or successes in your career?

- What successes were you able to replicate time and again? Which ones felt more like one-offs?
- Were you ever part of a team that felt so in sync and so productive that good results came repeatedly and organically? If so, what created the magic?

Thinking of the above prompts, identify 4 to 6 specific practices or actions that brought about desired results or superior performance throughout your career. Write down your responses.

Action 1:

Action 2:

Action 3:

Action 4:

Action 5:

Action 6:

Now, for this section, think about the best-performing bosses, mentors, coaches, or colleagues you've observed on your leadership journey. The stars and standouts.

Writing down your answers (and keeping track of key words on your Post-it® Notes), consider:

How did these leaders approach problem-solving, big projects, and lofty goals?

How did they create momentum?

What steps did they take to continually deliver results?

In what ways were they able to get the job done in the present while setting the stage for the performance to continue in the long run?

Take notes here or elsewhere; you'll want to remember the fruits of this reflection.

The Other Side

Now, conversely, think about the cautionary tales you've witnessed. You can learn almost as much from reflecting on what *not* to do as you can from reflecting on what *to* do.

- What bosses have you had who were lousy?
- How did they deflate or belittle people?
- How did they contribute to a toxic culture – or worse, how did they undermine a highly functioning culture and reduce it to a stunted, low-performing, or highly political culture?

Keep a list of negative practices and actions that you think of. (You'll build upon this list in the Study step.)

Negative Actions

After you've written everything down, try to distill what you've learned from this introspection into a few guidelines. Imagine that a new leader has asked you for some advice on what practices work for cultivating enduring high performance.

In a few sentences, based on this exercise, what would you tell them? What specific practices would you recommend (ask better questions, wait to speak until the end, don't blindly accept the easy solution, thank people earnestly and often, etc.)?

Now that you have a growing library of insights and practices gleaned from your reflection into your personal experiences, it's time to revisit your values to begin to solidify your leadership beliefs. Unlike your values, which are a broad accounting for your standards in every area of life, your **leadership beliefs** are very specific to the craft of leadership: they are informed by your values but they exist to guide you specifically in the way you behave in your leadership.

Choosing Your Leadership Words *(page 69 in The Blueprint)*

Sometimes doing all the reflecting on your own is a heavy lift. Examples can help stimulate your thinking. Mette Norgaard, leadership expert and teacher, and Doug's longtime collaborator and friend, has developed a handy list of leadership words (included on the next page).

Looking at these leadership words, circle the ones that resonate with you the most. Make sure to use your Post-it Notes too, especially in this section. As you work through the exercise, looking at the words provided as examples, you will likely think of additional words, not listed there, that are meaningful to you; write those down too.

At the end, you will make a master list of your leadership vocabulary. This should be a focused list. Unlike in the previous exercises where you wrote down everything that came to mind, in this step, you'll be more judicious and editorial.

LEADERSHIP WORDS

Accomplishment	Efficiency	Integrity	Pragmatism
Accountability	Empathy	Intelligence	Progress
Adaptability	Enthusiasm	Intensity	Recognition
Adventure	Equality	Intimacy	Reflection
Alertness	Excellence	Justice	Relaxation
Ambition	Fairness	Kindness	Resilience
Appreciation	Faith	Leadership	Resolve
Assertiveness	Fame	Learning	Resourceful
Boldness	Family	Logic	Respect
Brilliance	Fearlessness	Love	Risk
Beauty	Fidelity	Loyalty	Responsibility
Calmness	Fitness	Mastery	Security
Candor	Freedom	Maturity	Self-Discipline
Certainty	Friendship	Meaning	Simplicity
Challenge	Frugality	Mindfulness	Solitude
Clarity	Fun	Money	Speed
Cleanliness	Generosity	Open	Spiritual Growth
Collaboration	Goodness	Optimism	Spontaneity
Commitment	Gratitude	Opportunity	Tradition
Community	Happiness	Order	Tolerance
Compassion	Hard work	Originality	Truth
Confidence	Harmony	Passion	Unity
Consistency	Health	Patriotism	Variety
Contribution	Helping	Peace	Vision
Courage	Honesty	Perfection	Vitality
Creativity	Honor	Persistence	Warmth
Credibility	Humility	Personal Growth	Wealth
Decisiveness	Humor	Playfulness	Winning
Diversity	Imagination	Pleasure	Wisdom
Duty	Innovation	Popularity	Wonder
Education	Inquisitiveness	Power	

© Mette Norgaard

Look back on all the exercises you've done thus far in *The Blueprint*, all the reflection and brainstorming, your values, the rough draft of your purpose, and the words you chose on the previous page. Taking all that into account, write down only those words or phrases that are especially resonant, that you can see yourself referring to time and again. This will become your leadership vocabulary.

What are the words you will use to find strength and to describe what is most important to you? What words hold the key to the person and leader you would like to become? This list will hold immense power for you as you go on your way.

My Leadership Vocabulary

Leadership Beliefs *(page 72 in The Blueprint)*

(Some of) Doug's Leadership Beliefs:

Old leadership paradigms are insufficient.

Leadership is a craft to be mastered.

It's *all* about the people

Work hard, be kind and amazing things will happen.

We can *always* do better.

To win in the marketplace, you must first win in the workplace.

You must be tough-minded on standards and tender-hearted with people.

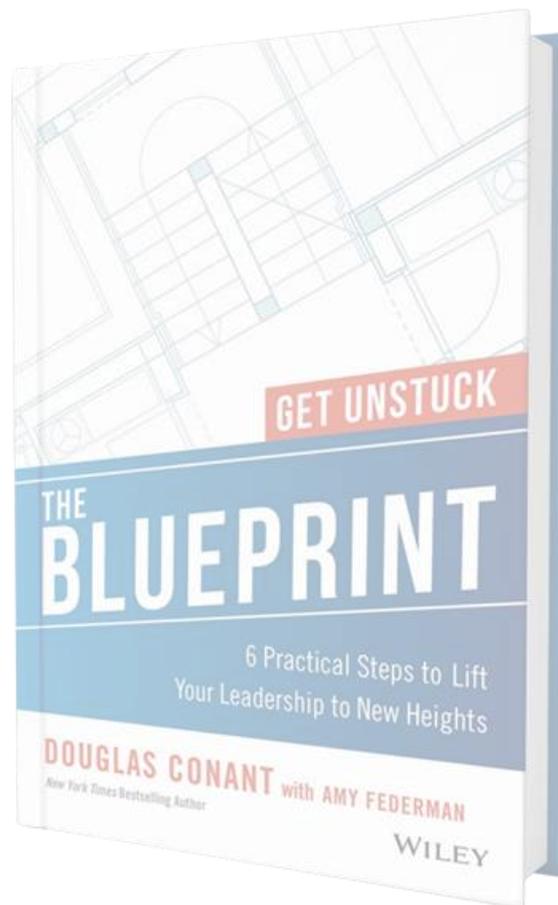
Now, take a stab at a preliminary list of your **leadership beliefs**. Use your **values** and your **leadership vocabulary** as a reference point. For example, if one of the words in your leadership vocabulary is “integrity,” a leadership core belief that brings that word to life might be “Always be true to your word,” or it could be as literal and on-the-nose as “I believe a true leader leads with integrity.” If one of your leadership words is “pragmatism,” a core belief that brings that to life might be “Look before you leap” or, borrowing from Stephen Covey, “Begin with the end in mind.” The possibilities are limitless. And there is no right or wrong. Make a rough draft in the following space.

My Leadership Beliefs

Your Foundation is coming along nicely. You now have an understanding of your values, which helped you compose a first draft of your leadership vocabulary, your leadership beliefs, your leadership purpose, and a deeper understanding of what motivates you and others, based on your own experiences and reflections. Time to progress to **Step 3: Study**

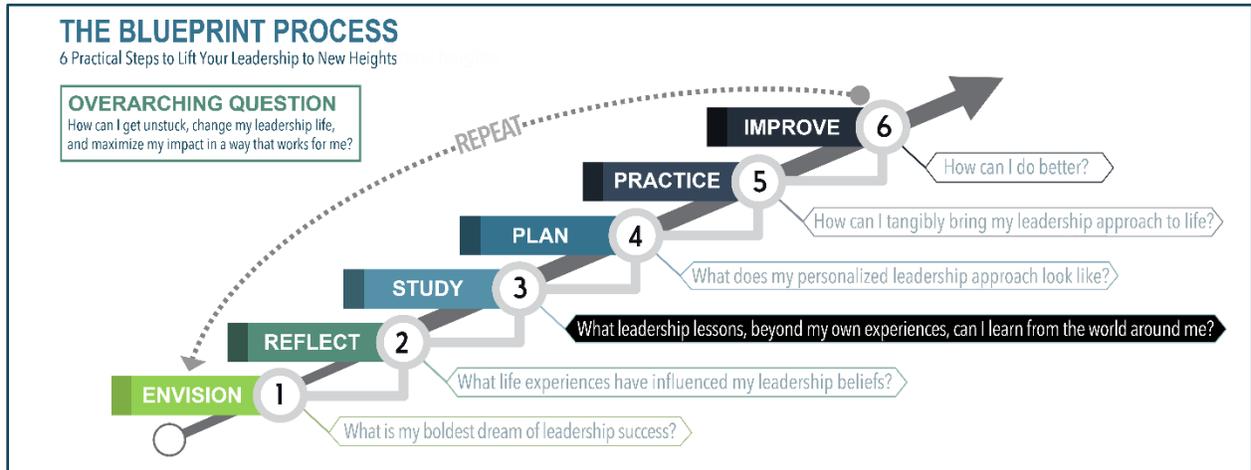
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Step 3: STUDY – Lay Your Groundwork

(Page 75 in The Blueprint)



In the **Study** step, you will fill in the cracks from your dig, laying the groundwork with all the learnings and insights from the world that exists beyond your own personal experiences. Finding inspiration all around, you will learn the importance of **building a network** and **doing your homework**.

EXERCISES IN THIS CHAPTER:

ENTOURAGE OF EXCELLENCE™

LEADERSHIP DOS & DON'TS

The Entourage of Excellence™ *(Page 80 in The Blueprint)*

This exercise gives you a framework for evaluating what you admire in other leaders. And it equips you with an on-demand advisory board that can assist you in your thorniest moments.

On your leadership journey, countless people have influenced the way you choose to walk in the world. It's likely you admire a host of different people, for many different reasons.

For example, there may be somebody who comes to mind when you think of an exemplary work ethic, or negotiation skills, or remaining calm under pressure.

Some of these people may be friends or family members. Others might be famous leaders or mentors. Others still may be authors, coaches, colleagues, or great thinkers from centuries ago. You might have a “best boss” who you think back on fondly, or still turn to for advice. Most leaders have “go-to” people who spring to mind when they think of the positive attributes they have observed and hope to emulate with their own leadership behaviors.

Inevitably, your “go-to” people change, depending on the situation. You might think of one person when you are facing a competitive situation, another person when you are preparing to give tough feedback, and another person entirely when you are trying to develop your emotional intelligence.

As you advance in your journey and encounter tougher and tougher problems, and you must make decisions faster and more decisively, it is helpful to put a process in place for having all the people who have ever positively influenced you at your disposal, no matter the situation.

The [Entourage of Excellence](#) exercise is a way to do exactly that; it is a way to add discipline and intention to reflecting on your leadership influencers. And it also jump-starts a process for having a high-impact entourage of advisors available to you at a moment's notice, anytime you need them.

To begin, start small. Your entourage doesn't have to be huge to begin with; the only requirement is that you think carefully about the exercise and populate your entourage with people who are inspiring and helpful to you.

First, choose:

- Two people from your professional life (past or present)
- Two people from your personal life (past or present)
- Two leaders from history who have inspired you

For each person you choose, write down:

- Their name
- The qualities you admire about them (e.g., teamwork, mental toughness, EQ)
- A brief story or anecdote (2 or 3 sentences) about why you are adding them to your entourage

[Use the spaces on the next page to record your Entourage.](#)

Entourage Member #1

Name:

Relationship:

Qualities admired (teamwork, mental toughness, EQ, etc.):

Brief explanation about why you chose them (2-3 sentences):

Entourage Member #2

Name:

Relationship:

Qualities admired (teamwork, mental toughness, EQ, etc.):

Brief explanation about why you chose them (2-3 sentences):

Entourage Member #3

Name:

Relationship:

Qualities admired (teamwork, mental toughness, EQ, etc.):

Brief explanation about why you chose them (2-3 sentences):

Entourage Member #4

Name:

Relationship:

Qualities admired (teamwork, mental toughness, EQ, etc.):

Brief explanation about why you chose them (2-3 sentences):

Entourage Member #5

Name:

Relationship:

Qualities admired (teamwork, mental toughness, EQ, etc.):

Brief explanation about why you chose them (2–3 sentences):

Entourage Member #6

Name:

Relationship:

Qualities admired (teamwork, mental toughness, EQ, etc.):

Brief explanation about why you chose them (2–3 sentences):

This inaugural group of six is just the beginning; as you get used to the process, you'll continue to add members to your entourage throughout your lifetime. Once you have compiled your entourage, it is always with you, wherever you go. Anytime you need guidance, you will simply do a quick mental accounting of your entourage, choose the right person for the job, and ask, "What would _____ do?"

To use your entourage list, mentally transport yourself to an actual consultation with the person you have selected.

Ask yourself:

- How would they respond to the situation?
- What would they recommend?
- What questions would they ask you?
- How would they challenge you?

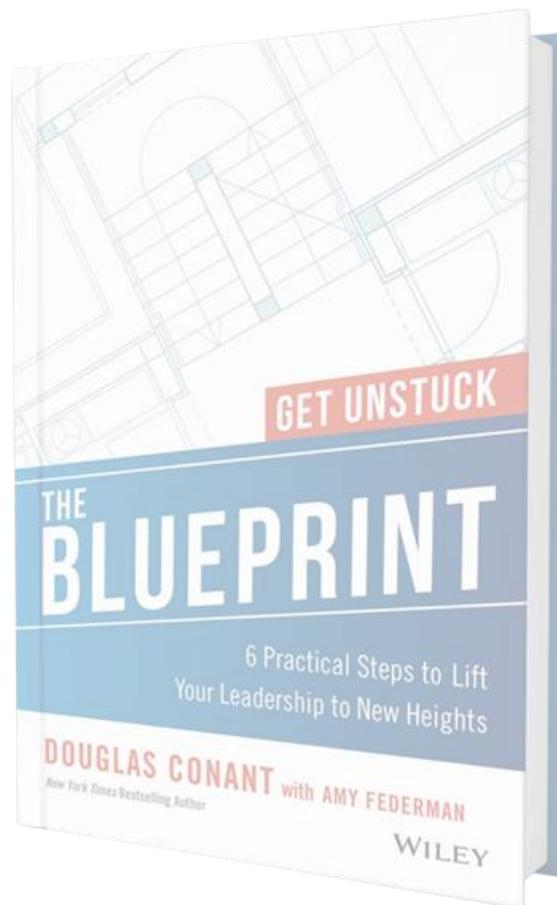
The more you practice the exercise, the faster and more efficiently you will be able to leverage your entourage in your decision-making.

Leadership Dos and Don'ts *(Page 86 in The Blueprint)*

In the Entourage of Excellence exercise, you created a list of the leaders you most admire and some of the reasons you'd like to have them in your corner. Now you'll take that one step further and extract some actionable insights from the previous exercise.

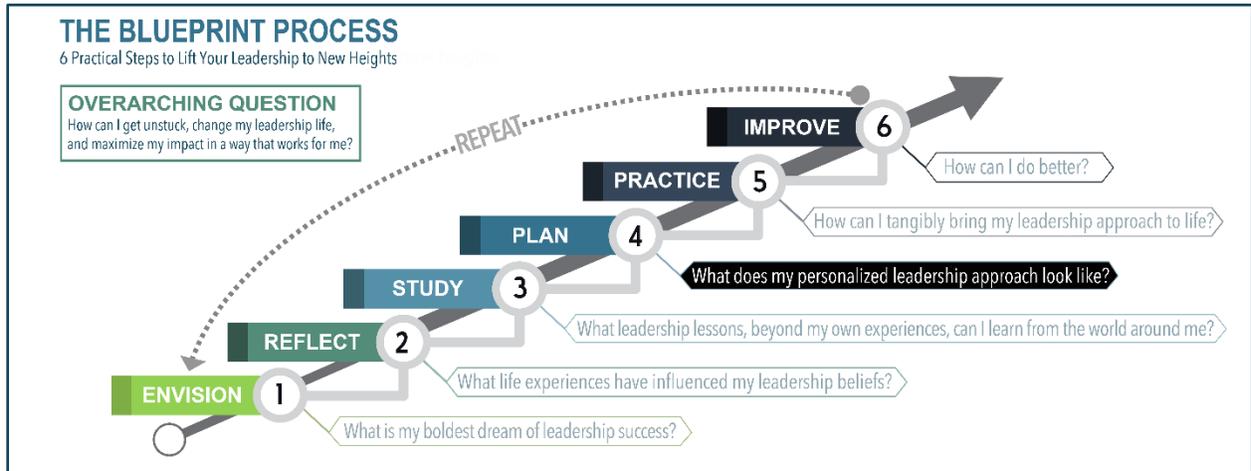
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Step 4: PLAN – Design Your Leadership Model

(Page 93 in *The Blueprint*)



Step 4: Plan is the fun part. Using design thinking as well as prompts, Post-it® Notes, and pen and paper, you get to conceive your Plan – an exquisite design for the exact Leadership Model you envision, derived from your Leadership Purpose and your Leadership Beliefs.

EXERCISE IN THIS CHAPTER:

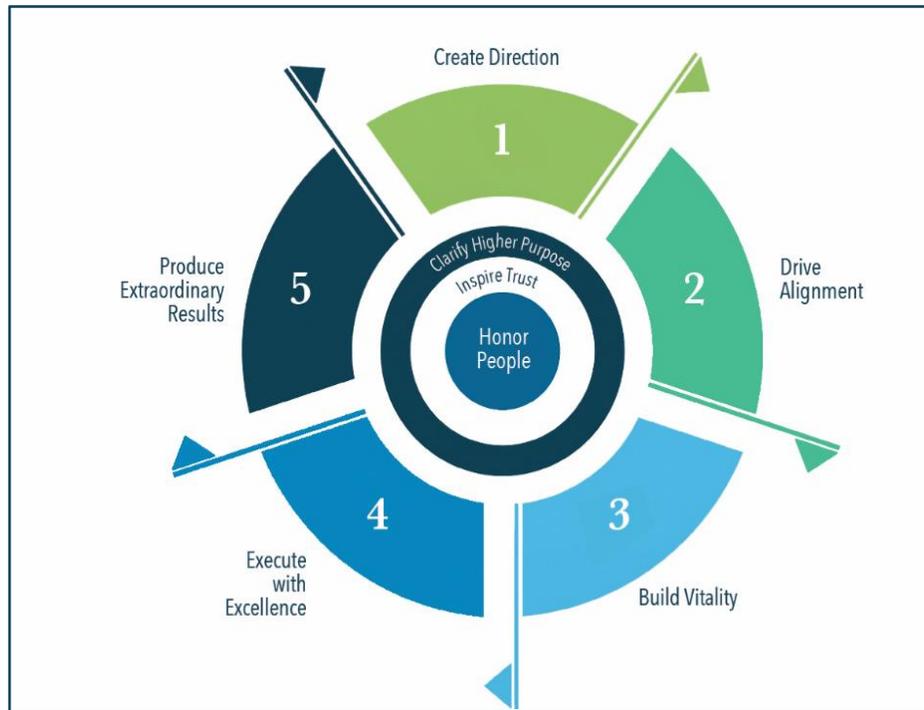
DESIGN YOUR LEADERSHIP MODEL

What Is a Leadership Model?

A leadership model is a representation of a system, composed of concepts and practices, which you use to help people – including you – know and understand your approach to leadership. At its heart, it is a visual representation of what matters most to you as it relates to your leadership and how you intend to behave as you work to reach your goals. Ultimately, with the creation of your leadership model, you will create a succinct encapsulation of how you plan to lead. The model you create will be a highly customized expression of who you are, what you believe, and how you want to act.

Doug's Leadership Model

The Conant Leadership Flywheel



Every Model Is Different

The Conant Leadership Flywheel is deeply personal to Doug. It doesn't have to work for you; it only has to work for him. The same will be true of the framework you design; it's yours, and yours alone, and it shouldn't exist to please anybody else (although you will have to learn to *use* it to get results that work for your organization).

The idea is not to help people build a model in a specific way, or in a certain image. Each person has their own unique leadership voice, their own approach that reflects who they are. The purpose of the Blueprint, is to help you find your own distinct voice, empower you to express it, and help you leverage it to get better results in work and life.

Why a Leadership Model?

It's important to understand *why* a leadership model can be so powerful. Most tools that help us on our leadership journey are external; we find and use them from sources outside ourselves. But a leadership model is meaningful in a special way because it is a tool we build ourselves, from the inside out.

Whatever design you choose for your model will capture your views on leadership in a way that both resonates with you *and* enables you to share your thinking with others. Once you have developed your model, as part of your overall Foundation, you have a resource that helps you to be consistent in your behavior. It is an elegant tool for holding

yourself accountable and communicating to others what to expect from you. You can use it as a litmus test to measure your actions against, and others can do the same.

Building Your Model – The Key Components

(Page 98 in The Blueprint)

Since every model is different, we are wary of being too prescriptive about how you build yours and what you include. This should be an improvisational process that allows you to grapple with various ideas, try different things, see what sticks, find what feels right, and combine all the fruits of your reflection thus far. That said, there are some broad guidelines about what your model should capture.

Guiding Question

Now that you've wrestled with your leadership purpose and your leadership beliefs, the guiding question for your leadership model should be:

How am I going to *advance* my leadership purpose and *honor* my leadership beliefs?

- Advancing your purpose is about how **effective** you will be.
- Honoring your beliefs is about how **authentic** you will be.

Two Basics

As a leader, you must simultaneously be attending to the expected performance of your organization *and* to the hearts and minds of the people who make up that organization. Fittingly, the best models address both.

Therefore, the two things you should strive to capture in your model are:

- Performance
- People

Clusters

No matter what shape or framework you land on for your model, you will need to have key practice areas. You will refine them in the next step, Practice, but to get started, begin organizing the key tidbits and takeaways from all your reflection into “clusters.”

So far, you should have been recording all your “epiphanies”—each meaningful word, thought, idea, practice, or phrase—onto individual Post-it notes, one for each “epiphany.” If you've been doing this you will have amassed quite a few Post-its at this point that you can now use as the building blocks for this clustering exercise. The more, the better.

If you have not been using the Post-it method, now is the time to extract a few words, ideas, or thoughts to use for your clusters. Do this by looking back now on the exercises you have already completed. Reflect on the process briefly and extract at least a few key insights, words, or ideas.

Contemplate:

- What revelations have been especially resonant?
- Is there an issue or idea that has occurred to you repeatedly?

Write all these things down on some Post-its or even on little pieces of paper that you tear off a larger piece of printer paper, and prepare to get clustering.

At this early stage, you can't have too many epiphanies, so don't worry about being overly selective about what you include. Later, you will pare these down and crystallize them into your key practice areas. But for now it will be a little hazy.

Grouping

On a large piece of paper, a notebook, a table, a desk, a whiteboard, a chalkboard, or really any flat surface, spread out all of your Post-its in front of you. Looking at them, you will start to draw connections between them. Themes will begin to emerge.

Ask yourself:

- Which words or ideas seem to go together?
- Which components seem to speak to your leadership purpose?
- Which components seem to speak to your leadership beliefs?

Start to organize all your Post-its or pieces of paper into clusters. Don't worry about it being "right" or "wrong." You'll have to play around with it, trying different pairings and groupings, and different shapes. But you will notice that distinct themes will emerge, usually 3 to 7 themes, but some find they identify many more than this.

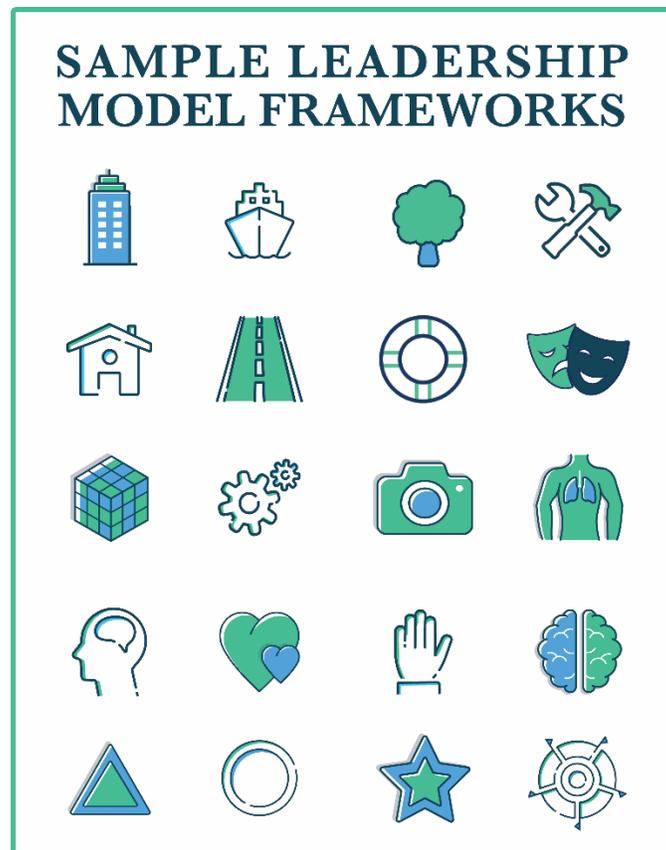
Here is a sampling of some popular themes to incite your thinking.

- Adaptability
- Growth
- Enthusiasm
- Purpose
- Trust
- Deliver
- Results
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Reliability
- Discipline
- Intention
- Kindness
- High standards
- Authenticity
- Ambition
- Humility
- Grit
- Determination
- Empowerment

Taking Shape

Take a stab at organizing your clusters into a shape or framework that speaks to you. The possibilities for your unique design are endless. A lot of people draw inspiration from their hobbies, their passions, and their outside-of-work pursuits. (This makes sense because, as we've learned, your leadership story is inextricably linked to your life story.)

To help you design your model, below are some examples of shapes and frameworks that you may find inspirational. These are just a small visual sampling of the infinite possibilities for shapes you might use to anchor your thinking and express your unique approach. Pick something that resonates with you.



As you can see, the shapes you might use to provide structure to your model vary widely in their form but all potentially provide a way to grasp something seemingly complex in a simple and easy-to-understand way, at a glance. So just go for it! Try something. If it doesn't work, try something else. Don't get bogged down in ideas of it being "perfect" or "finished." You are merely creating a prototype.

Once you have something that you are happy with as a starting point, use the following questions to evaluate your model before moving on to the next chapter.

- Does my current model include a way to deliver on performance?
- Does my current model include a way to honor people?
- Are there any words or concepts that are redundant that I could cut out?
- Which words or concepts feel indispensable? Which ones would I definitely not get rid of no matter what?
- Finally, is there one concept or theme that feels *most* important – a cornerstone or center to the entire model?

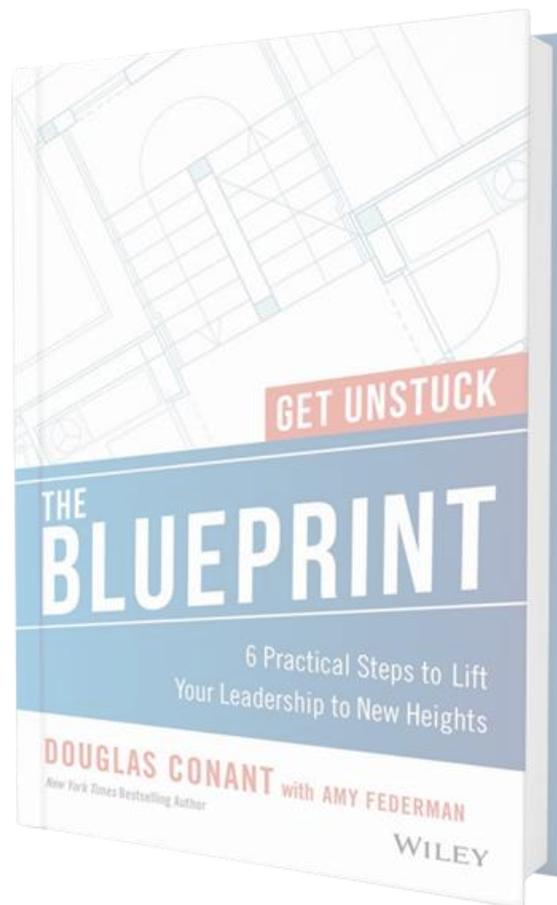
Draw Your Model

Use this space to draw a sketch of your emerging model:

Once you've iterated on this model, and it becomes second nature to you, you will be able to draw it on demand and express it verbally in just a few minutes. To that end, in the next Step: **Practice**, you'll have an opportunity to make your model even stronger and clearer.

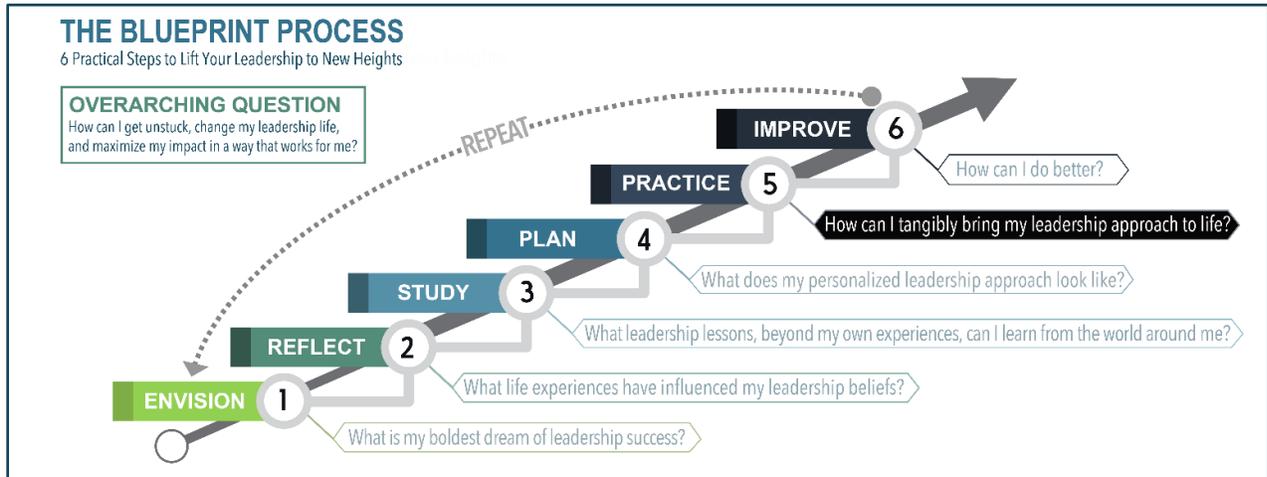
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Step 5: PRACTICE – Build Your Leadership Profile

(Page 109 in *The Blueprint*)



In this step you will build **Practice** into your change process. You’ll brainstorm small steps you can take – little, actionable practices – that you can begin to fold into your habits. And you will begin to create your **Practice Treasury**, a stable of behaviors that will help you to more precisely bring to life the leadership plan you designed.

EXERCISES IN THIS CHAPTER:

- PRACTICE TREASURY
- KEY PRACTICE AREAS
- PICKING YOUR PRACTICES

Building Your Practice Treasury

(Page 113 in *The Blueprint*)

Now it’s time to build up your arsenal of effective practices. The good news is, you’ve already done half the work! In keeping with the small step ethos of *The Blueprint*, you will now set the stage to do two incremental things:

- Refine the key practice areas of your leadership model.

- Identify just one practice for each area in your model that brings the concept to life.

Eventually, your practice treasury will have dozens of go-to actions and behaviors that bring your model to life. You'll keep adding to it over your lifetime, and, increasingly, you will have fun doing it.

To start, refer to the work you've already done in the previous steps. First, look at the Entourage of Excellence and "Dos and Don'ts" exercises you completed in the **Study** step.

The Dos and Don'ts you already identified *are* practices you can use as inspiration now. Looking at those practices, you already have a stable of actions you might consider for your practice treasury.

Pick out some of the best practices and write them freeform in the space below. These will inform what you do in the next two exercises.

[My Starter Practice Treasury:](#)

Choosing Your Key Practice Areas *(Page 115 in The Blueprint)*

Key practice areas are the finalized guiding themes of your leadership model; they are what your clusters should evolve into. They define what is most important to your plan for success in your leadership, outline what matters most to you as a leader, and embody your standards for conduct.

Doug arrived at eight key practice areas in his leadership model: **Honor People, Inspire Trust, Clarify Higher Purpose, Create Direction, Drive Alignment, Build Vitality, Execute with Excellence, and Produce Extraordinary Results**. You might have a different number. Whatever they may be, now is the time to identify them.

Compare the practices from your Dos and Don'ts to the rough draft of your leadership model.

- What practices fit with which clusters?
- How can you narrow your clusters down or expand them based on the practices you will use to bring them to life?

- Based on your looking at it with fresh eyes, what are they key elements you want to include?

After answering these questions and revisiting your prototype, now is the time to pick and commit to the key practice areas of your leadership model.

My Key Practice Areas Are:

Picking Your Practices *(Page 116 in The Blueprint)*

Now pick one practice for each key practice area in your model. Refer to the examples in the Blueprint book for extra inspiration.

For each practice you choose, make sure it is:

- Specific
- Repeatable
- Requires focus
- Iterative (subject to feedback)

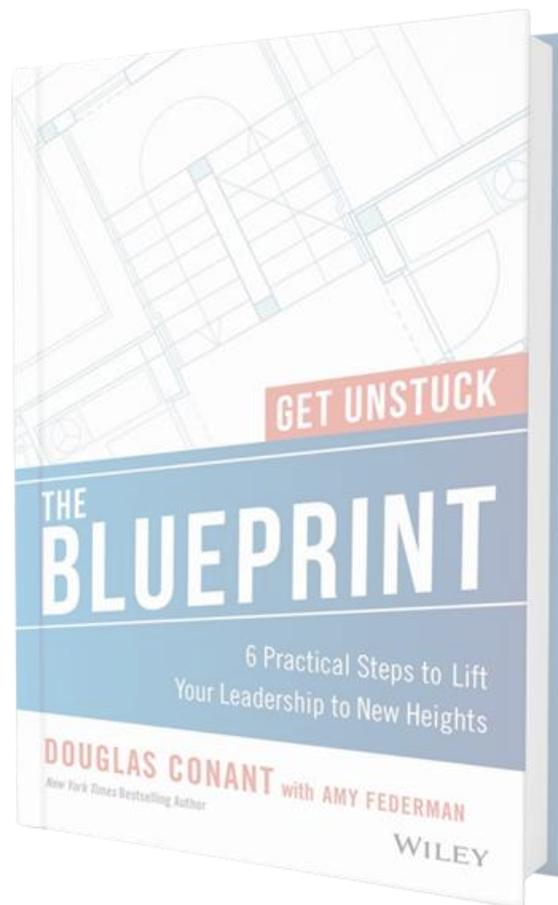
Extracting specific actions from your recollections, write down one distinct and actionable practice for each area of your evolving leadership model using the space that follows. You'll probably end up with between 3 and 10 things.

If one of your areas is “High Standards,” you might think of an easy-to-replicate practice for challenging people to do better in a way that keeps them engaged – like asking them to repeat important discussions back in their own words, thereby cementing their understanding of next steps.

If one of your areas is “Relationships” or “Relationship Building,” a practice in service to that might be holding informal meetings outside the office. If one of your areas is “Communication,” your practice might be explicitly stating your expectations in a manageable way.

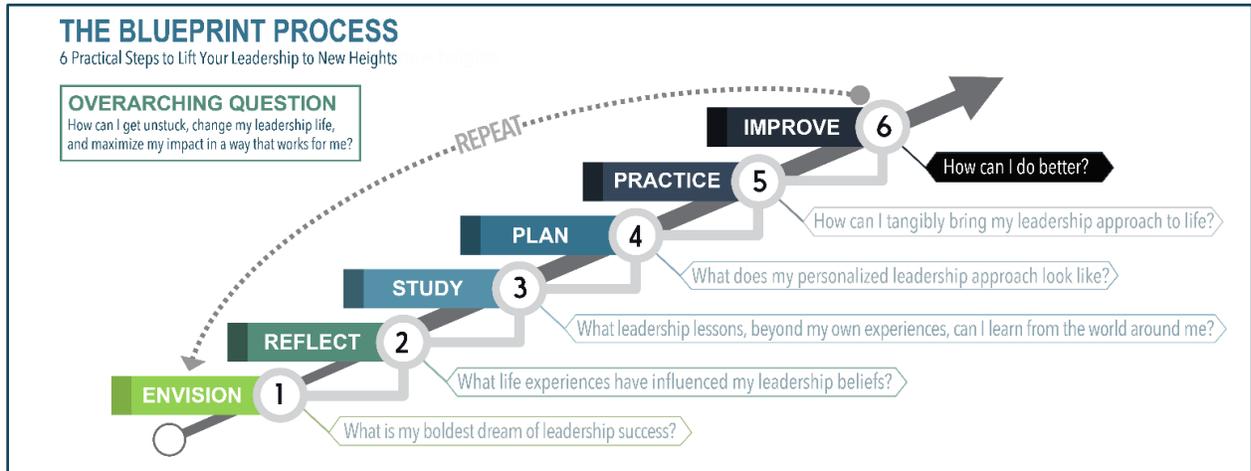
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Step 6: IMPROVE – Reinforce Your Foundation

(Page 123 in *The Blueprint*)



In step 6 you **Improve**, continually learning what you did right, and what you could have done better, reinforcing the strength of your Foundation in perpetuity. Here you will develop a simple Improvement Plan to propel you forward on your ongoing journey and will align your personal leadership approach with the expectations of your organization.

EXERCISES IN THIS CHAPTER:

THE FIRST STEP

LEADERSHIP IMPROVEMENT PLAN

An Urgent Question

To make the lessons in this step real and to internalize an improvement orientation, you have to keep this one urgent question at the top of your mind: How can I do better? This is the same question everyone who has ever excelled in their field has used as their North Star—from Beethoven to Botticelli to Beyoncé. That’s why, while improvement is technically the “final” step in the Blueprint, it’s actually a springboard that propels you back into your iterative process for getting better; in a way, the very act of repeating your

journey through the Blueprint is a step unto itself. It's a reminder that your journey is never finished, that to truly achieve mastery is a continuous improvement pursuit.

The First Step *(Page 129 in The Blueprint)*

As a first step toward Improvement, go back through your first five steps of the Blueprint and see if they hold up to scrutiny at a high level. Are there better ways to answer the first five questions? Have you unearthed all the insights you can? Does your emerging approach make sense? What can you change or rework? What needs tinkering? Revisit the work you have done and ask yourself the following questions associated with each step:

1. **Envision:** What is my boldest dream of leadership success?
2. **Reflect:** What life experiences have influenced my leadership beliefs?
3. **Study:** What leadership lessons can I learn from the world around me?
4. **Plan:** What does my personalized leadership approach look like?
5. **Practice:** How can I bring my leadership approach to life?

Be honest with yourself:

Does your Foundation hold up to scrutiny from a “head” and a “heart” perspective? Is it genuinely a reflection of the leader you hope to become?

Once you have been back through this review, and feel comfortable with the state of your Foundation, it is time to go a level deeper; it's time to focus on adding value (refer to the content regarding the “adding value” concept on page 130 of The Blueprint).

Leadership Improvement Plan *(Page 132 in The Blueprint)*

Pick three areas that play to your strengths, that you will be able to pursue with the joy that comes from doing the things you are good at, rather than the things that leave you feeling frustrated or depleted.

Think – what inspires you?

Thinking back on your first step in the Blueprint (**Envision**), what did your boldest dreams of leadership success look like?

Holding that vision in your mind, contemplate: What do you have to improve to get there?

Maybe it's that you want to apply your skill set in a new way by pursuing board governance, or maybe it's that you want to enhance your cultural fluency with an international assignment. Perhaps you want to deepen your already rich relationship-building abilities and you want to create an action plan for that.

Write down three areas in which you want to improve and one action you will take over the next 30 days in service to that improvement initiative.

Here's an example of how it should look.

Area: Strengthen team morale

Action: Over the next 30 days, commit to holding at least 1-3 meetings in an informal setting, whether an off-site or a walk-and-talk outdoors.

Now, you try.

Area:

Action:

Area:

Action:

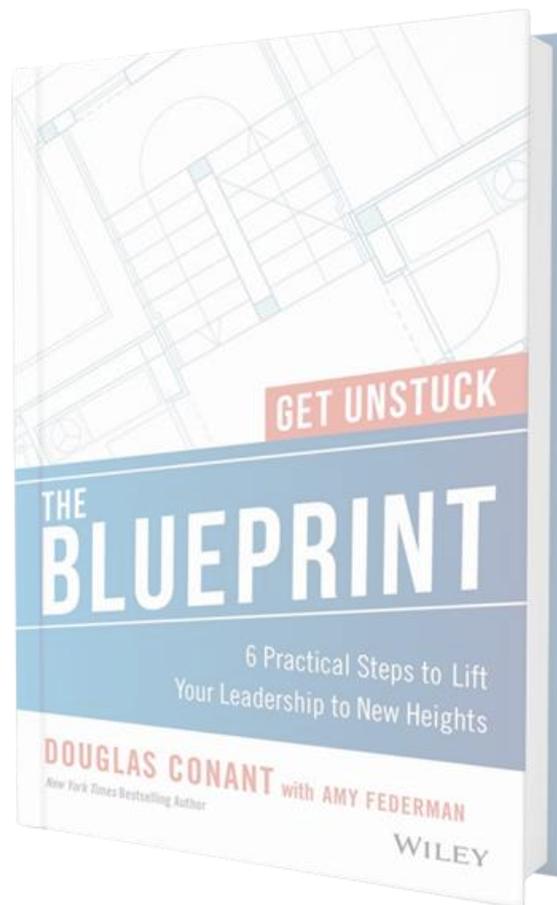
Area:

Action:

You'll find that a continuous improvement approach does not only intensify your own ability to contribute. It becomes amplified through every person you come in contact with. You will find your growth mindset radiates outward contagiously, infecting your organization, your colleagues, your family, and your friends.

NOTES – Page for Post-It Epiphanies

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Putting It All Together: Your Five-Day Action Plan *(Page 137 in The Blueprint)*



Hopefully, you are starting to feel rooted in your Foundation, which will emerge as a platform for reaching your goals in a way that is authentic to who you really are and hope to be.

Ideally, each component of your Foundation is in perfect harmony with all the others. Together, they should be formidable and self-reinforcing. But thus far, this has been a private project. To begin to see changes in your organization and the world around you, you will have to take the benefits of your journey out of the theoretical world and put them into action.

Day 1: Leadership Expectations Audit *(Page 139 in The Blueprint)*

This exercise will help you align the expectations of your Foundation with the expectations of your organization. As you work through the following prompts, if possible and/ or applicable, you should refer to your job description, a recent performance review, and your organization’s leadership expectation guidelines.

Prompts

Q1: Thinking about your current role, what are the top three things you personally are expected to deliver?

Q2: What are the top three things the people who report to you are expected to deliver, under your stewardship?

Q3: In your organization, what are the most highly valued leadership behaviors and qualities that are expected?

Q4: In what three areas are you most confident you are meeting or exceeding performance expectations?

Q5: If applicable, write down any additional key thoughts or expectations that came to mind as you reviewed your job description, performance review, or leadership expectation guidelines.

To finalize the audit, fill out the worksheet provided with the goal of picking at least one – but no more than two – major thing(s) connecting your Foundation to the external expectations of your current organization.

LEADERSHIP EXPECTATIONS WORKSHEET

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL EXPECTATIONS	ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP EXPECTATIONS
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
SHARED EXPECTATION(S)	
1.	
2.	

Day 2: Share Your Emerging Thinking and Approach

(Page 141 in The Blueprint)

On Day 2 of your action plan, you will be tasked with walking a trusted colleague through your emerging thinking and approach, “declaring” yourself to them. If it helps you feel more comfortable, use our “Declare Yourself” prompts to help you craft the conversation in your own words.

“DECLARE YOURSELF” PROMPTS

1

I just finished reading a leadership book called *The Blueprint* . . .

2

The book asked me to share my new leadership thinking with a trusted colleague. Can I have a minute? I really value your input.

3

The situation our organization is facing is . . .

4

The leadership expectations of our organization are . . .

5

I subscribe to those expectations but also have high expectations of myself and of our team . . .

6

More specifically, my leadership purpose is . . .

7

My leadership beliefs are . . .

8

I have created a personal leadership model to help me be more authentic and effective. It looks like this . . .

9

I have identified a few leadership practices which help me bring this thinking to life . . .

10

I would love your feedback. What do you think?

Day 3: Commit to One Practice *(Page 143 in The Blueprint)*

In Step 5, you brainstormed one practice for each area in your leadership model, and you chose two or three of the most approachable practices to implement right away in the coming weeks. But to break this down into an even smaller, more incremental step, on Day 3, commit to using just one practice that you will pledge to use on that day, no matter what. Pick one you are certain you will have the opportunity to implement on Day 3.

After you've tried it out at least once, you may find it helpful to keep the following log at the end of the day, time permitting.

Practice Log

What, exactly, did you do? How did you use your practice?

When did you do it?

How did it go?

Day 4: Write Yourself a Handwritten Note *(Page 143 in The Blueprint)*

On Day 4, write—don't type—yourself a letter that you will read again in three months. Writing by hand helps you to connect more deeply to the content, so take care to handwrite the note. This exercise helps you organize your thinking into a progress report that measures your work against your goals for your leadership. To keep your thinking sharp and clear, your note should be no longer than two pages, and try not to spend more than five to ten minutes on it.

Thinking back on what you have done in Days 1 to 3, briefly address the following three questions:

- What's working?
- What's not?
- How, specifically, will I want to have improved three months from now?

After you've written it, fold it up, put it in a drawer, and make a calendar reminder to ping you in three months to revisit the note. You might surprise yourself with what you have accomplished by then with your Foundation holding you up strong and proud.

Day 5: Journal Entry *(Page 144 in The Blueprint)*

Now that you've had almost a full business week using your Foundation in the real world, take some stock of how it's going. This doesn't have to be handwritten (although you can use the space below). Just find five minutes somewhere in your day to record your answers to the following prompts.

Prompts

What immediate difference have you seen this week?

Have you been true to yourself and your beliefs thus far or have you stumbled?

How well have you "walked the walk" in alignment with your leadership model?

Are there any emerging blind spots in your approach that you should be aware of?

Onward

Having worked your way through the steps in the Blueprint for the first time, you're officially on your way to living the life and leadership you've always imagined. Using the five-day action plan, you have already begun to forge the fruits of your six-step journey into a durable and interconnected platform for reaching your goals – and (if applicable) you have begun to marry your personal leadership style and beliefs with the culture and expectations of your current company.

Always remember: the whole of your Foundation is infinitely more important than the individual components. Take a moment to feel proud of what you've accomplished. You've come a long way already. You are now positioned to execute on your exciting plans for your life and leadership.

But your work is not quite done. In the spirit of “grow or die” you will continue to refine your Foundation, and work your way through the six steps of the Blueprint time and time again. Luckily, it gets easier and easier. You've done the hardest part and you're well on your way. But to make sure you're building the best version of yourself from the Foundation you've designed, you will have to gain a greater understanding of timeless leadership principles. Make sure to read and engage with the crucial lessons contained in Part II: Manifesto. There you will learn and integrate the enduring tenets of “leadership that works.” These tenets will only enhance your ever-deepening Foundation.

PART II: MANIFESTO

Leadership That Works—It's All about the People *(Page 151 in The Blueprint)*

In Part II, you'll get anchored in ten timeless principles of “leadership that works.” To support the Foundation you developed in Part I, you will need a deep understanding of what leadership is – and the timeless principles that enhance leadership effectiveness – no matter the practitioner.

What Is Leadership?

Leadership is the art and science of influencing others in a specific direction.

To influence people effectively and create an evolved leadership approach, you must first learn how to leverage enduring leadership principles: the basic building blocks. Once you're better steeped in the fundamentals, you can more ably deploy innovative, high-impact leadership practices that capture the spirit of your Foundation.

Although there are an infinite number of pillars that contribute to effective leadership, if you take care of the following ten, everything else takes care of itself.

The ten foundational tenets of “leadership that works” are:

1. High Performance
2. Abundance
3. Inspire Trust
4. Purpose
5. Courage
6. Integrity
7. Grow or Die Mindset
8. Humility
9. How Can I Help?
10. Have Fun

These ten tenets are numbered to keep them organized but there is, by design, no hierarchy to how they are presented; they are not intended to be in any particular order. Many of these principles overlap; there are aspects to some that can also be found in others. They exist harmoniously with each other. The more you ground yourself in these principles now, the more enduring your leadership legacy will be tomorrow.

The Highest Truth about Leadership

There is a “higher truth” about leadership that knits together the ten tenets. Your ability to apply any of the learning in *The Blueprint* and grow as a leader is predicated upon this: [leadership is all about the people](#).

Leaders need followers. Followers are *earned*; they’re not guaranteed on the merit of your title alone. To earn the confidence of your constituents and spread your influence, all of your actions must be tethered to a commitment to honoring people. This is the single most important thing for leaders to understand.

[As you engage with Part II, remember](#): When you honor others with your attention, they will honor you back with their commitment, hard work, and trust. You must tangibly show employees that you value *their* agenda before you can ever expect them to value the organization’s agenda.

High Performance *(Page 169 in The Blueprint)*

This chapter offers a firm reminder of a simple but often forgotten truth about leadership—that leadership is about creating and delivering sustainable value for all stakeholders. The best leaders use every available tool in their arsenal to lift performance and build a better world. If you don't perform, nothing else matters much.

EXERCISES IN THIS CHAPTER:

TIME ZONE CHECKLIST

COMPETENCE CHECKLIST

CHARACTER CHECKLIST

Leading in Three Time Zones *(Page 176 in The Blueprint)*

To make better decisions, leaders must think about our sphere of influence as not only extending to our stakeholders, our organization, and our community – but *across three time zones as well: the past, the present, and the future.*

The specific demands of each time zone are as follows.

The Past: A leader must learn from and honor the past.

The Present: A leader must meet the expectations of the present in a quality way.

The Future: A leader must create a clear and tangible path for a more prosperous future.

To meet these demands, leaders must become “time travelers” who can transport themselves to *all* of these times zones simultaneously – mentally, intellectually, and emotionally – within the space of a mere instant.

Doug has a simple but highly effective habit for leadership “time travel,” a **Time Zone Checklist**. It only takes sixty seconds but within that short time you can unearth helpful insights and recalibrate decision-making.

Time Zone Checklist

Past: Have I taken a clear-eyed look at the past and does this course of action reflect what I've learned?

Present: Am I thinking clearly in the present and does this course of action honor the expectations of today?

Future: Am I compromising the future and, if not, does this course of action pave the way for continued prosperity and success?

It only takes a moment or two to run through this checklist and it reliably sharpens decision-making.

Competence and Character Checklists *(Page 179-180 in The Blueprint)*

Honoring people is the linchpin in effective leadership. But you have to remember *why*: the goal is to deliver high performance. the best leaders *always* have performance at the top of their mind. Everything they do, believe, try, learn, or say is in service to performance.

If you want to lead effectively, your focus should unwaveringly be on conjuring extraordinary effort and superior results – results that best meet the needs of *all* stakeholders.

There are two primary pillars to delivering high performance: competence and character. For a comprehensive way to self-assess on both fronts, see the Competence and Character checklists on the following pages.

Competence Checklist

Go through the list to get an idea of where you stand now, and then use the checklist as a reference for practices you can use to strengthen your leadership Foundation over time.

Give yourself a numerical score from 1-5 for each item.

Score yourself 1 for "poor"; 2 for "needs work"; 3 for "average"; 4 for "good"; and 5 for "excellent."

As you revisit the checklist, watch how your scores change and improve in the long-term.

Intellectual Intelligence (IQ)

- 1. Can you simultaneously process information on multiple fronts to make smart decisions on-demand, under pressure, and in the face of complex challenges?
- 2. Can you pinpoint what resources are needed? Do you identify the right person for the job and delegate the right things to the right people?
- 3. Are you proactive about identifying, and addressing, areas for improvement in your organization?
- 4. Do you create direction? Can you build an aspirational and achievable plan for advancing the agenda of your organization?
- 5. Do you have a disciplined process for measuring progress against that direction and course-correcting as necessary?

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

- 1. Can you sense the emotional "pulse" of your organization? Do you tune in to people's motivations and fears to facilitate their full engagement in the agenda of the enterprise?
- 2. Are you good at hiring and recruiting—not just for job function but for overall fit and compatibility?
- 3. Are you simultaneously both tough-minded on standards and tender-hearted with people?
- 4. Are people confident in your ability to lead them? Have you earned their trust?
- 5. Do you say, "thank you" and celebrate achievements through recognition programs when appropriate?

Functional Intelligence (FQ)

- 1. Do you have a demonstrable understanding of your area of responsibility (e.g., sales, human resources, finance, design, editorial)?
- 2. Do you have a demonstrable understanding of your industry (e.g., energy, consumer packaged goods, healthcare, media)?
- 3. Are you able to clearly communicate with people within your area of expertise? (Do you speak the "language" of your industry?)
- 4. Do you consistently meet or exceed the standards of performance for your own role or job function?
- 5. Have you been able to build a network of people who you can rely on for guidance and expertise?

Character Checklist

Go through the list to get an idea of where you stand now, and then use the checklist as a reference for practices you can use to strengthen your leadership Foundation over time.

**Give yourself a numerical score from 1-5 for each
Score yourself 1 for "poor"; 2 for "needs work"; 3 for "average"; 4 for "good"; and 5 for "excellent."**

As you revisit the checklist, watch how your scores change and improve in the long-term.

Integrity

- 1. Do you do what you say you are going to do and do it well? Consistently?
- 2. Is your behavior the same when others are around to hold you accountable and when nobody's looking?
- 3. Do you honor your commitments?
- 4. When you make a mistake, do you swiftly acknowledge it and take action to correct it?
- 5. Do you make sure not to abuse your power or use your station to threaten, frighten, coerce, or manipulate people?

Putting People First

- 1. Do you treat people with respect?
- 2. Do you listen carefully to people and value their opinions, input, and feedback?
- 3. Do you have people's backs? Do you stand by them when they need your support?
- 4. Do you regularly ask people, "How can I help?"
- 5. Do you enjoy your work and imbue your organization with a sense of joy, fun, or liveliness?

Courage

- 1. Are you unafraid to make business personal – and to be passionate about your leadership? Do you declare your passion and beliefs to others?
- 2. Do you evidence the courage of your convictions, advocating for your beliefs and standards?
- 3. Do you continuously challenge people to do better, in a supportive but tough-minded way?
- 4. Can you uphold high ethical standards even in environments where unethical behavior is accepted or even normalized?
- 5. Do you persevere when things get tough?

Humility

- 1. Do you acknowledge that you are not always the smartest person in the room?
- 2. Do you acknowledge that you can always do better, humbly embracing that there is always room for improvement?
- 3. Are you aware that you are dependent on others to get things done for the organization? Do you demonstrate that awareness?
- 4. Do you actively seek advice and/or counsel from books, workshops, mentors, coaches, or contemporaries?
- 5. Are you able to let your guard down and be "real" with people so they can better connect with you?

Courage *(Page 223 in The Blueprint)*

There is an urgent need for courage at the heart of effective leadership. It must be pursued as a skill – as part of your leadership development – the same way you would with any other crucial competency.

EXERCISE IN THIS CHAPTER:

COURAGE EXERCISE

Courage Exercise *(Page 230 in The Blueprint)*

As an exercise in courage, and in keeping with the “small steps” approach of *The Blueprint*, start by just being more mindful *this week* of how you react to the challenges presented to you.

Consider the following prompts and write down any notes or thoughts you might have in the space provided.

Is there a task you’ve been avoiding, a conversation you’ve been putting off? Notice your instinct to avoid it and choose to do it instead. Have the talk. Write the email. Address the issue.

Practicing courage doesn’t have to mean only confronting things that are unpleasant. It can also mean making a better effort to express gratitude or to interact more fully with people. Is there a person whose contribution you’ve been meaning to recognize? Tomorrow, write them a genuine note of recognition. Reinforce the positive behavior of someone you value. Be more present in the very next moment. When we make a consistent practice of choosing the courageous response, courage becomes a habit. And that habit has the power to transform our leadership.

Notes:

Humility *(Page 273 in The Blueprint)*

The best leaders are expert **connectors** and **listeners**. Humility is the virtue that binds these two competencies. To build rapport with stakeholders and find the best solutions, it is crucial to gain deeper self-understanding; this helps you shed the ornamentation of prestige and brings you down to earth in more interactions.

EXERCISE IN THIS CHAPTER:

GETTING REAL

Getting Real *(Page 278 in The Blueprint)*

How can you begin to apply some of the reflection you’ve used in the Blueprint to get to the “center of the onion”? It is a worthy exercise to reflect on any patterns that may be preventing you from pursuing the fullest expression of leadership humility.

Are there “airs” you put on, ways you engage in chest-puffery, intimidate, boast, or add bluster to interactions that you can examine and begin to scale back?

The more you are able to let some of these affectations go and “get real” with people, the better you will be able to lead them to higher ground.

Use this space for notes about this prompt.

Conclusion—Stay True to Yourself

(Page 309 in The Blueprint)

Now that you've completed your journey through *The Blueprint*, you are poised to accomplish incredible things. You are empowered with the knowledge, the insight, the competence, and the character to get unstuck, maximize your impact, and change your life. Everything is waiting for you. You've put in the work and made the commitment; now you just have to follow the path.

This isn't an ending. It's a beginning.

You'll continue to refine your Foundation and its key components indefinitely, whenever you have the time and the inclination to jump back into it. You may find you derive great satisfaction from continually revisiting and working through the Blueprint throughout your lifetime – in a manageable and incremental way. It gets easier each time. And your behavior and reactions in real time will become much sharper, more adept, and more productive. You will improve continuously.

There Is Only One You

The key message of *The Blueprint* is that your life story is your leadership story. Only you can write it. Only you can chart your course. The six steps have helped you connect more deeply with your unique talents, insights, experiences, goals, and dreams. Our hope is that you finally learn to lead like yourself; you are the only *you* who exists. There isn't another soul alive who can replicate your exact Blueprint, who possesses your one-of-a-kind Foundation. Cherish that knowledge. Your contribution is special.

As long as you stay true to yourself, you are capable of incredible things. You can overcome hardships. You can do things that are really, really hard. You can live the life you envision. You can influence people and make an impact on the world around you. The possibilities are limitless. You can do *it* – whatever "it" is for you, whatever ignites your passion, discipline, intention, and resolve.

You have already taken the first step. You have everything you need to succeed. Your leadership is uniquely poised to be a high-performance expression of both your character and competence.

As you enter the next phase in your leadership journey, know that we're in your corner rooting for you. We're excited to imagine all the ways you might share your positive leadership gift with the world in the way that only *you* can. People are waiting for you to make a difference. The time is now. Go forth and lead!