

INTENTIONAL LEADERSHIP



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Intentional Leadership

In today's leadership culture there is a lack of holistic thinking that benefits both the leader and those they are leading. Instead we have yielded to the trends of the society and the whims of the publisher hoping for the next *Good to Great*. This actuality has produced leadership cultures that rise and fall on the latest book that an influencer has told them they "must read." Thus, peer pressure is the number one promoter outside of the initial marketing push from agents, marketers and publishers alike.

What is missing is continuity, strategy and perspective. The truth is that each of us wake up every morning with priorities on our mind, whether cognizant or not. These priorities typically revolve around pain resolution (putting out fires). We are then met with the hope of tomorrow, which inevitably is a hope for gain in the future. That is where the latest leader fashion becomes inserted.

Don't get me wrong, I love books and the latest thoughts from some Harvard prof. I am by no means downplaying creative thought or strategic articles... I welcome them. My concern is in the timing and continuity of thought that is needed to properly digest the latest best seller. As humans, we are susceptible to wanting what we do not have. When we get that something we easily squander it because the cares of the world and the simple needs in front of us kill the new thought or process. That is where cynicism begins.

Keep those stacked books right where they are while we focus on building a framework of thought that allows you to properly insert the newest 'this' and latest 'that.'

The concept revolves around being **intentional**. This is not a new word, but the practical application may just be what the doctor ordered.

What is the opposite of being intentional? Unintentional, I know. Accidental is a better word that comes to mind. Have you ever read a book entitled *Accidental Parenting* or *Unintentional Leadership*? How about *Being Purposeless as a Leader*? Endearing? I think not.

The truth is that accidental parenting doesn't work and purposeless leadership does not raise up the next level of leaders. Our world is littered with leaders who *hope* their companies grow and parents who *want* their kids to be great kids. The problem is that hopes and wants do not work as a business plan.

What does work? The growth of organizations happens through the intentional capacity improvement of leaders over time along with a strategic demeanor towards a focused success. That is a mouth full. Stated more simply: companies need to raise their capacity, build a growth infrastructure and pour fuel into leaders and projects that will grow the business. To do this, it is vitally important to be intentional in the following areas:

- **Being Intentional With Time**
- **Being Intentional About Improving the Levels of Leadership**
- **Being Intentional About Growth (Team and Organization)**
- **Being Intentional With Your Growth**

Being Intentional With Time

There have been many great examples of maximizing time in my life. My family did not waste time. Growing up working at the farm or in other business ventures caused us to plan our day around something I call "Formal" time. Formal time is the time when you are "on." It is the time in front of customers, giving presentations, working on a project, etc. Growing up with a strong work ethic gave me a good perspective on using our formal time wisely.



Time is the most consistent asset we all share. We all get up in the morning, we normally drive somewhere, have lunch, work, drive home, have personal or family time, and then sleep. You may get up earlier or later, work at home instead of an office, or do some responsibilities more than others, but the general commonality is that we consistently do the same things over and over again.

Yet, there is another type of time that will impact your success more than any other. We call it "Informal Time". Informal time is typically your preparation time or down time... from what you do in the morning before you start work, to what you do in your car and the minutes before you sleep. The truth is that the informal time affects the formal time more than you can imagine.

How many times have we heard, "I don't care what you do on our own time, but when you are at work I want to see you..."

That is exactly the problem. It is our down time that impacts the success of leaders. What comes in, goes out. The informal times are when most of the filling up occurs. The formal times are when most of what is in us comes out. That is why I am trying to make a strong case that your informal time will impact you far greater than your formal time. In fact, in a study we commissioned of 100 corporate leaders, we found that those who use their informal time are 75% more effective in their leadership ability.

It makes sense doesn't it? Think about an athlete. Those who use the offseason to work out and strengthen themselves are typically more productive over the long-term on game day.

Informal time is considered exercise time, drive time, lunch time, starting time, personal and family time, etc. When you start to understand the importance of time I believe you will begin intentionally planning your activities more wisely. Here are some examples:

- **Exercise Time** - What are you listening to while you exercise? Mix up your listening portfolio to include leadership lessons.
- **Drive Time** - the average American travels 34 minutes to work (68 minutes round trip). If you are listening primarily to the news, you may start your day with a negative or cynical outlook. If you are consumed by talk radio, you may be ostracizing 50% of your workforce because of our partisan society.
- **Desk Time** - When you start your day with email, you are on your way to a train wreck, especially if you get bad news to start the day out. Instead, start the day out with inspiration in a biography or reading of some sort. We created a program, called *Everyday Leader*, that gives leaders this kind of perspective.
- **Family Time** and so on...



Being Intentional About Increasing the Levels of Leadership

We believe that growth happens through leadership. Every organization needs twice as many leaders than they currently have. In fact, the number one issue I hear from organizations is, "We simply need more good leaders." The issue might be the quantity of leaders, but I would first start with the quality of leaders.

Raising the levels of leadership is a consistent rally cry of Dr. John Maxwell. He has established new language to help people increase their leadership. As the partner of Dr. Maxwell we spend large amounts of time investing in the topic of raising our capacity. The reality is that most everyone knows they need to do it. It is just simply one of the most difficult things to do with the burden of the daily grind.

Be intentional with raising the capacity and quality of the leaders on your team. Start with yourself. We typically will begin helping leaders by giving a 360 or organizational assessment, or a strengths profile... something to give us a framework to begin (www.giantimpact.com has a number of examples).

Once we see what level of leadership a leader is on we can then proactively build a plan that raising these levels much like a workout training regimen impacts the physical nature of a person. We call the plan Leader Pathing. It is similar to a workout routine in that we give suggestions as to what they should learn (read, listen to, watch, etc.) and what they should do (events, retreats, coaching, training, etc.)

We acknowledge that all leaders grow in different ways. That is why it is important to build a nimble plan based on variety to reach every facet of a leader. Our leader pathing for an individual or organization is focused on a calendar year and has measurements and goals along with fun events, experiences, etc.

Raising the levels of leadership takes a concerted effort to raise both the quality and quantity of a team. Yet, it is an effort that produces amazing results if done properly.

Being Intentional About Growth

Growth is a great word. It is a natural part of creation. When you plant a seed it grows if it is in the right soil with the proper amount of water. The same is true for a team and an organization. They will grow if they are set up properly and nourished regularly. This is where the word **intentional** is important again.

We believe that the intentional growth of a team can happen when mental barriers are broken and team trust is established. Years ago one of our partners, David Woods, developed a program called *Strategic Orienteering*. It is an amazing system that helps leaders connect with their teams around a multi-year growth strategy. The process takes multiple connections around the vision and clear communication on growth initiatives. What we found was that growth is hard when people and communication are out of line and it is more prevalent when expectations and positive accountability are in place.

Being intentional about growth always starts with the leader, yet, it always occurs through a team.

Being Intentional With Your Growth

And so it comes back to you: you are responsible to grow as a person and as a leader. It starts with you.

The key is in being self-aware... to admit that you need to grow... to admit that you need some fresh perspective. You are the key to the growth of your team and organization, even your family.

Your growth depends on your desire to grow and on your commitment to grow. Desire and commitment together can do a lot in a person.



For instance, I have known for years that I needed to get healthier. I needed to eat better and I needed more physical activity. As my waist band expanded and my huffing became obvious to my wife on our walks, it was time for change. The desire to change had been there, but my commitment wasn't until the moment a good friend of mine got serious and started seeing amazing results. I had to admit that if he could do it, I could as well. That was what turned on the commitment, but one last thing was missing. I needed a plan for execution of my desire to get in better shape and my commitment to exercising.

My wife and I bought one of those TV exercise programs, P90X. They had the eating plan and the workout regimen that I needed to order my days. My desire connected to commitment and my commitment leveraged a plan to produce great results that I had wanted for years.

- **Where is your desire to grow as a leader?** Do you want to grow?
- **What is your commitment to the process?** Are you willing to do what it takes to get to the next level?
- **What is your plan?** Do you have a regimen to help you become a great leader?

Where From Here?

And so it comes. Please realize, I can't give you desire - that is up to you. I can't impact your commitment, either. What I can do for you is give you a plan. If you follow this plan it will give you the basic activities you need to get moving and start growing as a leader. You can always add other things into this plan. The plan is really a framework of growth that incorporates informal time (growth during drive time or exercise time) and formal time (events, retreats, book plans, etc.)

It is up to you to commit. Once you start it will be pivotal to start your teams (those you lead), as well as your organization. Once people see your success they will ask what has gotten into you. That is when you get them moving toward growing as leaders. And that is what it means to be intentional.

Growth happens by intentional focus on raising the level of leadership. Here is to your intentional success.