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| Image result for outlaws to in laws  Mining the Genius in People to Produce Incredible Results | Overview  Uncover practical leadership approaches to unleash the talent in your organization to improve business results  Neil Cordrey  New Reality Leadership |

**Outlaws to In-laws**

Mining the Genius in People to Produce Incredible Results

**Overview**

When I finished college in 1981, I became a manager of a Hardee’s restaurant. It was a poorly run place and I had minimal experience to know what would help. After I got settled, I stumbled on a couple leadership principles that helped the restaurant increase revenues 2.5 times over the next 18 months. At the time I did not realize the connection, but these principles are universal leadership approaches that successful organizations use to impact bottom line results. If I would have known what I do today, we could have increased revenues 20 times.

I moved to the Eckerd Drug Company in 1984. In 1961, Jack Eckerd expanded his father’s one store business in Wilmington Delaware to over 1500 stores. Shortly after starting work there, I predicted it would go out of business based on a few observations. It did several years later. I stayed at Eckerd’s two years and left before it fell. I applied at DuPont and they hired me in 1985. That journey lasted 32 years. That is when I became an official Outlaw, a term people used when they talked about employees from our building. During the 15 years in that building, we went through an incredible transformation from a chaotic, hap-hazard group to an incredible, high-performing team that significantly impacted our business.

Go on a journey with me through my career. I will share how an operating team called The Outlaws went from ‘just operators’ and a ‘pair of hands’ to producing significant achievements that impacted bottom-line results. We will discover ingredients that every high-performing group and business possess to produce high morale, engagement, and improved business results.

In the journey, we will discuss four pillars of high-performing organizations and introduce concepts that we created as the foundation for New Reality Leadership.

To create high-performing teams, leaders must:

* Create a compelling vision that all employees understand and own
* Translate strategic goals practically to all employees
* Dynamically develop employees both technically and interpersonally
* Engage and empower all levels of the organization

You will see very cool, practical applications of these four foundations in the outlaw story and how that produced business improvement. We added additional cases that highlight how these four areas impact teams and business results. In one recent case, a team reduced millions in waste and improved output all within 6 months of applying these principles.

We introduce two foundational concepts in this book and teach teams how to integrate these into their groups in the New Reality Process.

* Shifting teams or businesses from Dependent to Independent to Interdependent organizations.
* Coaching employees to personally shift from Dependence to Interdependence using a three-phase process called the Tier Model.

We explain these concepts and provide examples of how high-performing organizations operate in the *Interdependent* stage with what we call Tier 3 employees. Tier 3 employees have strong technical skills but add particular interpersonal skills that improve their value. We share more throughout the book.

When you finish reading, you will be able to answer these questions. The New Reality Leadership Approach provides the process to help you and your organization achieve these results.

1. What is an Interdependent person, team, or organization and why is shifting to Interdependence critical to improving profits?
2. What is the Tier Model? What are the 21 Tier 3 Characteristics of high-performing employees? How do Tier 3 employees and teams positively impact business improvement?
3. What does true empowerment look like? What are a few ways you can engage and empower employees and teams with minimal cost and efforts?
4. What are a few leadership behaviors that that can unleash employee engagement and performance to increase business profits?

**Contents**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Title | Content focus |
| 1 | No thinking allowed | They hired me not to think but do. |
| 2 | Off to a bad start | Many people start new jobs without a substantial orientation and training approach. They follow people around and learn as they can. This approach lowers morale and engagement. |
| 3 | ‘Just an Operator’ | Every employee has a hidden genius. The leader’s role is to find and maximize it. |
| 4 | Finding Genius in a ‘Pair of Hands’ | Leaders uncovered the genius in their “pair of hands” operators and unleashed them to do amazing things. |
| 5 | Creating a Compelling Vision and Translating Strategy | Seeing a clear vision and how our work impacted the vision opened up huge levels of innovation for the outlaws. |
| 6 | The value of a groaning supervisor | When a supervisor moans about an employee, it is often because the employee is not exhibiting a Tier 3 approach. |
| 7 | Increasing revenue by growing Tier 3 employees | Shifting employees from a dependent to an independent/interdependent approach improves revenue. The result in this case: Improved revenue 2.5 times in 18 months. |
| 8 | Creating amazing first impressions | Make new hires feel like professionals and you will get professional results. |
| 9 | True Empowerment accelerates progress | Giving a front-line employee a project and trusting their approach accelerates improvements. |
| 10 | Way outside the box | Challenge the status quo, try new things, take prudent risks and get great results. |
| 11 | Making something great out of nothing | A Tier 3 person can make a great impact even in an ordinary role. |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| 12 | Development plans that create Tier 3 Employees | You need this approach to truly unleash the potential of your team. |
| 13 | My knowledge is my power | Some people feel that holding on to knowledge increases their value and job security. It does the opposite and creates drama and conflict in teams. |
| 14 | We may not see the final fruits of our labors | We may spend years developing employees and not personally reap the value. |
| 15 | We were not perfect by any means | Even the best organizations have challenges and we had many. |
| 16 | Reverting from an Engaging to Dominating leadership style = disaster | What happens when you shift from an engaging and empowering leadership style to a profit-driven dominating approach? An Increase in turnover from 15% to 75%. A significant drop in sales. Out of business. |
| 17 | Why are they not excited about our great vision? | Leaders talk and determine strategy and vision. They then tell employees the direction and wonder why there are blank stares and resistance. Engaging employees in the strategy and how to achieve it builds engagement and gets you further in the journey. |
| 18 | Speaking of resistance | How to turn total resistance into full engagement and excitement in less than two minutes. |
| 19 | Reacting to failure | Perhaps this one leadership trait is the most impactful of all; either negatively or positively. |
| 20 | What does an Interdependent Organization look like? | Every high performing, sustained organization works in the Interdependence Stage. |
| 21 | Aligned leadership is essential | All leaders in an organization must be aligned with the vision and the desired culture for change to occur. |
| 22 | Giving away knowledge | Many experts fear sharing too much with others because they want to be the go-to person. |
| 23 | Prepared for the CEO | If your CEO walked in to your area and asked for a tour, what would be your first reaction? |
| 24 | Create smiling faces while you drive business improvement | If your CEO walked in to your area and asked for a tour, what would be your first reaction? |
| 25 | Conclusion |  |

**Chapter 1**

No thinking allowed

*They hired me not to think but do.*

If you invest in hiring good people, view each person as a professional and develop them as if they are geniuses.

My interview for DuPont lasted 30 minutes. The interviewer asked me a couple of questions and then told me about the DuPont Country Club. In the last minute, he stated that if they hired me, my job was not to think or invent things. The chemists and engineers did that. I would run lab tests.

I took the entrance test with 40 other people. The test administrator told us that if we passed the test, we would be lab technicians and nothing else. If we wanted to be something more, please find another company. I passed the test, they hired me, and I showed up for orientation. The facilitator emphasized that we were the hands and the engineers and chemist were the brains. On day two, they handed me a parking sticker with a number 12 on it. I asked what that meant, and the leader said all 12s would be shift workers in the building over there with no windows. This ride was not what I signed up for, but I kept on with the process. I met my shift a few days later, and our boss said that we ran equipment and the mechanics did the tool work. We were not trained to handle tools. Actually, there was no training.

I met my ‘pair of hands’ team. Frank was a helicopter pilot in the reserves. Mark replaced his car engine over the weekend. Marcus could program computers. Caleb gutted and remodeled a 100-year-old house. Seemed like a lot of talent to be just a pair of hands. In the next couple of days, an engineer referred to us as ‘just operators.’ It did not feel good to be seen as a second-rate contributor. And, many people lived into the view of the leaders and technical people. Using principles discussed in the rest of this book allowed us to break the paradigm and create a high-performing team.

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What talent is hidden in your organization?

Do leaders know employee’s skills and interests? What processes do you have that help leaders better know their employees?

How well do employees share their skills and interests within their teams?

**Chapter 2**

Off to a bad start

*Many people start new jobs without a substantial orientation and training approach. They follow people around and learn as they can. This approach lowers morale and engagement.*

Would you be comfortable taking someone from the show 60-Minutes around and showing them your training approach and allowing them to ask employees about how well they were trained?

After orientation, I started on the midnight shift. I drove up to the guard house and gave the attendant my name and building. He paused and said, so sorry that you got assigned to the Temple of Doom. I wondered what that meant. The second night he said, “You got the short straw and assigned to The Poison Palace.” I still did not know what we did or made so started to ask others what that meant. They said the building housed killer chemicals like Phosgene, Chlorine and Hydrofluoric Acid. The stuff could kill you in seconds or a slow death over a few days.

Our building had no windows because of the chemicals. We were one of 60 buildings at the site, and no one on site knew what happened in it, but they knew it was bad. HR *seemed* to assign those they thought were higher potential to work daywork in a lab and the rest of us in this building. We wore bright blue coveralls, yellow hard hats, and black rubber boots with yellow tips. We stood out on our campus and felt like second-rate people. That is partially how we got the name, Outlaws. Leaders eventually understood this challenge and improved the uniforms and other areas.

You would think there would be a robust training process with high hazards. The shift leader handed me a blank tablet and told me to write down everything I saw, what valves to turn, when to do something, etc. There were no procedures or training guides yet. The business was rapidly expanding, and they were hiring people quickly. The leaders were trying to do the right things but could not keep up.

I wrote down pages of information, but we did not know what we did not know. One evening a person with not much more experience than I was making a batch of product and an alarm sounded. I asked him what it meant and what he should do. He said he had no idea but the person he watched ignored it. It *was* important, and after five minutes, the entire batch shut down and formed a brick in the equipment. We had many issues and lost production time because we did not know how to troubleshoot problems.

When I started, I had little manufacturing skills. I was often lost trying to figure out the maze of pipes and vessels. We had a high turnover rate and I became a shift leader after nine months. I had to give the business directors a tour on my first week as a shift leader and fumbled my way through. This somewhat embarrassing event spurred me on to learn as much as I could and help other learn. I figured out how to use the computer and began making procedures for the new people. They started to learn quicker. They assigned new people to my shift, and I eventually became an area trainer. It had taken me 18 months to learn the basics and I was still learning. I wanted to make a difference and see if we could make the training fun, easier, and efficient.

Leaders saw the value of exceptional training and fostered our growth as trainers. Our trainers visited another site that had a strong training program. This site invested in people and had organized approaches to orient and train all people. Their operators and mechanics could run and troubleshoot complex problems. Trainers from many DuPont sites traveled there to learn their approach. Our training group adopted their methods and we improved our training program so that new employees could learn in less than half the original time. Over time, we became one of the sites that others learned from. We would periodically travel and teach sites best practice training methods.

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Becoming a high-performing organization requires a robust approach for on-boarding and training all employees.

How would you rate your employee orientation process?

What kind of formal training processes are in place? How would you rate your training on a scale of 1-10?

What is one improvement you could make to your orientation and training process?

**Chapter 3**

*“Just an Operator”*

*Every employee has a hidden genius. The leader’s role is to find and maximize it.*

Do your front-line employees feel like ‘just employees’ or valued employees contributing to growing the business?

I did not know much about training and learned that DuPont had a corporate training network. They were meeting in our area in a couple of weeks. I called the network leader to see if three other new trainers and I could attend their meeting. He was excited and welcomed us. He told me that there was one guideline. You come to learn, but you also agree to volunteer to help the group get better. I told him that I was ‘just an operator’ and was not sure I had much to offer or would be allowed by my leaders. He graciously reprimanded me and told me that there was no such thing as ‘just an operator.’ He said everyone is a genius and together we bring amazing talents to make the company great. He changed my view and my life. The network made us feel valued. The trainers developed and contributed in many ways. Near the end of my career, I helped run the training and development network. We ensured people felt valued and could share their expertise with other sites. Plant operators and mechanics were often promoted to training roles at our manufacturing sites. When they introduced themselves on our monthly calls, I could discern how much confidence and empowerment they had. I heard the phrase, ‘just an operator’ dozens of times. Our network leadership team helped many of these trainers learn and grow in confidence. I saw many trainers transform from unconfident and unskilled to leading within our network and within their business. There is no valid phrase such as ‘Just an Operator, mechanic, administrative assistance, cashier, customer sales representative, cook, etc. Every role is critical to business success. The Leaders role is to find the genius and maximize their contributions.

Get to know employees. Find their passion. Development them technically and interpersonally. Give them assignments that go beyond their job description at times to help them expand and grow.

Describe an employee who started at an entry-level position and moved into a broader, more involved role.

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**Chapter 4**

Finding Genius in a ‘Pair of Hands’

*Newer leaders uncovered the genius in their “pair of hands” operators and unleashed them to do amazing things.*

When I started, some leaders where hierarchical. It felt like a caste system. My immediate boss was different and always respected and engaged us for ideas. One engineer did not talk to me until I became a shift leader. Over time, new leaders filtered into the building, and they led with engagement and respect. The training supervisor made the four trainers feel like professionals. He ensured we learned the best ways to train and allowed us to travel to seminars and other sites. We learned ways to make training efficient, and people learned faster. The newer leaders wanted operators to learn more than pushing buttons. They provided on-going courses to help them master the equipment operation and troubleshooting. Operators traveled to other sites to learn, and our leaders invited operators to our location to share operating techniques.

Operators at most plant sites did not have development plans. We did. Each operator had a plan and met regularly with their manager to review. A lot of the development took place out of the classroom through project assignments. One operator led a three-million-dollar project and had chemists, engineers, and others supporting him. No caste system there. Leaders sent operators to plant sites around the world to help start up new products or solve chronic problems. The team had a ‘can-do’ mentality. The business was inventing many new products, and we were the first to run them on a larger scale. The team took seemingly impossible challenges and figured them out. The leaders and employees were shifting from ‘They’ to ‘We.’ This shift is critical to unleashing geniuses and creating a team that grows business results. While hard to quantify, the ability of the outlaw team created millions in revenue and cost savings.

I did not see many of these transformations until years later. Many of the ‘just operators’ went on to achieve positive results in subsequent roles. Some were promoted to higher levels. Others stayed in technical roles and made significant contributions.

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Many employees possess skills that leaders do not know of or use. The role of the leader is to find and mine that talent.

How do leaders see front-line employees? As a pair of hands or a professional?

Do leaders see employees as geniuses that add value to the team or just employees?

Think of one employee who has the potential to do more than they are now. What can you do to help them?

**Chapter 5**

Creating a Compelling Vision and Translating Strategy

*Seeing a clear vision and how our work impacted the vision opened up vast levels of innovation for the outlaws.*

**Translating Strategy to Shift the Culture**

When I started, it was common for operators and mechanics to sit in the control room for several hours waiting for direction. We were dependent on leaders or technical leads to provide guidance. We did not know the goals or have the empowerment to make decisions. When we did run a product, they gave us a run sheet with precisely what to do. We pushed the buttons, made the product and shipped it. We did not know what we were making, who was buying it, or why it was important. Lab chemists were responsible for the products we ran and most just told us the parameters and we followed them.

During one new product launch, the lead chemist got us together and explained his goals and challenges for the new product. He asked for help to watch for specific issues that might arise. The operators paid attention and helped him solve the problems. More chemists began to share their goals and found that the outlaws had insightful ideas to help. We learned the science behind the products and how to optimize the equipment to get the right results. These changes increased our value and ability to run more products.

We did not initially know it, but we were making marketing and sales look good. Marketing and sales personnel would promise customers products by certain dates and then come to our leaders and hope we could do it. We did not realize why we had tight deadlines and had to work overtime. An outlaw leader wisely had the idea for us to meet the marketing and sales people, give them a tour of how we made products and had them share their goals. They had no idea what hoops we jumped through to meet their deadlines and we had no idea of how much money they were generating by their strong marketing and sales campaigns. Seeing each other’s perspective opened up new doors for both. We partnered more. After we successfully made and shipped the product on time, they were grateful and would give us hats and pizza. That interaction and others were vital ways to translate strategy to the front-line, and it was a foundation to create an energetic, high-performing outlaw team. It was one more ingredient that shifted us toward becoming In-laws and an interdependent, high-performing organization.

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Many employees do not understand the goals and strategies of their area. They simply do the work leaders assign to them. Effective leaders make the business visible to employees so they know the short and long-term goals and see the score. Imagine playing football without seeing the scoreboard or keeping any game statistics. Players would run plays and hope for the best.

What are several ways your organization shares goals and strategies with all people?

What are a few ways you could improve in this area?

What kind of scores do they see such as sales, expenses, customer complaints or praise, or what the competition is doing?

**Creating a Compelling Vision was a Catalyst for Growth**

In 1990, the senior business leaders did something I had not seen. They created a 10-year vision and wanted to engage all employees in sharing the dream and getting us to understand how we could help the business achieve it. They bussed 300 employees to a dinner theater for the day. They had great food, entertainment, and times to share the vision in practical terms. They called it Project 2000. Employees were excited and got on board. We spent time discussing our work in small groups and how we could impact the vision. Their philosophy was changing. They saw all employees as crucial components of success vs. a hierarchical culture. It took some time, but this was an essential step in shifting us to an interdependent, high-performing team.

In this meeting, leaders explained that our competition was beating us to market by a year. They asked us to think of ways to reduce our research time and to reduce the time from discovery to first sales from seven to five years. Seeing the need and WHY this goal was important sparked hundreds of ideas from the agricultural business and all levels of the outlaw team. Our specific research campaigns would run for several weeks. We would then shut down to clean out equipment which took three weeks. We only ran 55% of the time. We were a bottleneck for the researchers who wanted to test products in our building. We set a goal to reduce clean up times by half. The operators, mechanics, engineers, and supervisors continually brainstormed ideas. They had innovative ideas like clamping all equipment so no tools were needed. That reduced several days on a cleanup. Operators had to wash equipment with hoses. They designed a clean-in-place spray system to clean the vessels without taking it apart. Operators were less exposed to chemicals than before, and it took less time. They reduced one task from four hours to 18 minutes. They cut another task from four hours to two minutes. Explaining that achievement requires a full case study in our training materials. They created improvement processes like 5S and lean (tools Toyota used to drive their success) before the lean culture became fashionable. Other ideas included improving training to reduce training time, cross-training employees, and building effective procedures and operating resources. We tried new things, took prudent risks, and adjust ideas after failures. Applying these approaches and working as cross-functional team helped us reduce clean up times by more than a week. We ran more products and helped the business reduce the time to get new products to market. The foundation of this achievement was understanding the vision and how we could impact it.

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Ensure employees know the vision. Clarify strategies to all employees including the front-line.

How well does your organization share information with employees, especially front-line employees?

Ask five people in your organization to articulate the vision. How excited are they about the vision?

Treat all employees like equal partners to achieve your goals and you will engage employees to achieve amazing results.

**Chapter 6**

The value of a groaning supervisor

*When a supervisor moans about an employee or team, it is often because the employee or team is not working in the independent or interdependent approach.*

If you face frustration and conflict within work teams, this next principle is a likely reason. The high performing employees and teams exhibited many of the 21 characteristics we call Tier 3 Characteristics.

Listening to complaining managers helped me see the characteristics of successful or irritating employees. Supervisors would chat through frustrations about employees with me. I wrote down what irritated leaders and what they liked. After five years, I had a list of both and created a model called the Tier Model. It has 21 characteristics of effective employees or teams. If you pick out a reliable employee and list why they are strong, you will see many of the Tier 3 characteristics. This list compliments the technical skills of a job. To be valued employee, they must be strong in the technical aspects. They then increase their value to themselves, their team, and the organization as they grow in these 21 areas.

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| 1. Proactively initiates improvements 2. Understands business strategy and how their work supports it 3. Finds ways to coach and develop others in their field of expertise 4. Willingly shares knowledge 5. Delights in other’s success. Does not fear the success of others 6. Views success of the organization in addition to their own success 7. Not willing to gain personally at the expense of others or the organization | 1. Views decisions with a long-term view. Strongly evaluates short-term decisions considering long-term impact 2. Grows and develops in their role and appropriately beyond current role 3. Willing to work on goals or necessary projects even if they know they will receive minimal recognition 4. Able to coach and mentor others through mistakes or failures appropriately 5. Customer focused. Makes an extra effort to please internal and external customers | 1. Allows their knowledge to be accessible if they were to move on 2. Prepares and develops a successor for their role 3. Identifies problems and helps with potential solutions 4. Challenges the status quo 5. Gives credit to others. Highly values and finds ways to recognize the impact others make to the organization 6. Works through ambiguous change proactively 7. Able to interact comfortably with most levels of the organization 8. Works effectively on teams 9. Listens and inquires for understanding before advocating their views |

Leaders know when someone is doing well or if they are not. This list provides a way for employees to assess their current state and for leaders to help the employee apply these attributes. Think of a person or team that has a lot of conflict or drama. Most likely, they are not applying one or more of these attributes. While the outlaws were not perfect, more employees and leaders exhibited these characteristics in the later years when our performance was high. Of course, some poor performers who did not exhibit these characteristics and who were not coachable were let go.

Creating a strong team and organization requires leaders to shift their teams toward these areas. The New Reality module called Maximizing Employee Performance provides an assessment and coaching process to help employees and leaders accelerate their development toward interdependence, or Tier 3. Several subsequent chapters provide examples of how employees used or did not use these 21 attributes.

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Higher Performing individuals and teams have many Tier 3 Characteristics. They perform well and make a strong business impact. There is less drama and conflict with high-performing teams.

List a couple of top performers or strong teams in your group. Circle how many Tier 3 attributes they have.

List a poor performer or team. Which characteristics are missing causing the issues?

**Chapter 7**

Increasing revenue by growing Tier 3 employees

*Shifting employees from a dependent to an independent/interdependent approach improves revenue. The result in this case: Improved revenue 2.5 times in 18 months*

When I graduated from College, jobs were scarce. I became an assistant manager at a fast food restaurant. Not my dream job but the New Reality approach started then even though I did not realize it. The restaurant was dingy, food quality was inconsistent, and the general operating discipline was poor. We operated in the red most months. Chaos was high and efficiency low. I spent most of my time in the reacting mode. I got calls at home and could not focus on improvement strategies since I spent my day fighting fires. To be honest, my first six months were in a total survival mode. I did not know what I was doing and had little motivation. The owner was not happy and had several performance discussions with me. I grew from his discussions and learned how to create a purpose and vision for the restaurant and me.

I do not like working in the reacting mode and being rewarded for “saving the day.” On the way to work one morning, two questions came to mind that changed the way I led there and in all subsequent roles including parenting. By answering these two questions when I walked into work each day, we reduced the chaos, created a stable environment and increased revenue 2.5 times.

These two questions threaten people but are the key to success and even if you do not read any leadership books but focus on answering these two questions, you will be a better leader than most leaders. The first question is:

What would it take for this restaurant to run for several weeks with no manager or assistant available?

In our current state it would not work. I predicted if the team had the skills and ownership to run the place for a few weeks, we would improve customer service and reduce chaos. It took a few months, but I saw progress. Our leaders created a formal training process. Previously, new employees watched others learn. It took a long time with inconsistent results. We developed a 30-hour course with accountability. Graduates had the skills and confidence to do all aspects of the restaurant. It was great having well-trained employees. We were shifting from chaos to stability or what New Reality calls Dependence to Independence.

We engaged employees for ideas and implemented them. This involvement made them feel valued and created ownership. We began to shift empowerment to the team to make decisions without calling us. They could call repair people, order food, call in people for overtime, and do basic managing tasks to keep the place running if leaders were not there. It made a difference and the chaos dwindled.

With empowerment comes challenges. I walked in one day and the shift supervisor said she made a big mistake. She could not get the food warmer to heat up so she called our repair person. He came and found the electric breaker was off. It was costly so she thought I might yell at her but I simply asked her what she learned and ideas for improvement. We marked the breakers better and I told her that $90.00 was an inexpensive learning cost for her leadership. If I had yelled, she would have always called me for future decisions but she went on to be a strong, independent leader.

Once the store was running methodically, I put the second question in place:

If I did not have to be immersed in running each detail of the day, what would I do with some free time to improve the business longer-term?

Developing, engaging, and empowering employees yields business improvements and shifts the group from chaos to stability. Acting on the second question is the secret to growing revenue. I now had time to improve the overall restaurant and the customer experience. We upgraded the dining room and outside look of the restaurant. We taught others how to do managing tasks so they could grow and run shifts while we were not there. We trained on in-depth skills such as the board of health regulations so we could have a clean and safe place. In 18 months, our revenues increased 2.5 times. Life was less chaotic and there were smiles on employees and customer faces. Turnover decreased which improved our stability.

The next goal was to shift the team to what New Reality calls interdependence. The owners resisted this shift so we never made it there. I left six months later.

For the outlaws, our shift toward Tier 3 had similar results. An impossible request came to our building from the marketing group. They needed several thousand pounds of product at a distribution center in three weeks. If we could pull this off, it was worth three million dollars. It was not on our schedule and we were in the middle of a three-week shutdown. It would take two weeks to have the equipment operational and then a couple of weeks to make and ship the product. The supervisor understood employee engagement and masterfully handled the situation. He could have told marketing it was impossible. But first, he got the area operators together, explained the dilemma and asked for wild ideas on how we could achieve the impossible. The tier 3 thinking emerged and in 20 minutes, these ‘just operators’ created a plan. It worked, and the business had a few millions in profit.

If shifting organizations from dependent to Interdependent made the organization a little better, most business leaders would have no interest. Moving employees toward a high-performing, interdependent approach is essential for long-term, sustained business improvement. If you own a company or manage employees, much of your frustration probably occurs because employees lack the tier 3 characteristics.

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Tier 3 teams positively impact business performance (sales, revenue, margins)

Where do you currently rate your organization?

Chaotic Stable High Performing

How well are your training processes organized?

How much trust do employees have to take on challenges and how capable are they to solve complex issues?

How do you react when employees make mistakes?

**Chapter 8**

Creating amazing first impressions

*Make new hires feel like professionals and you will get professional results.*

You only can make a first impression once. Investing in the orientation period is crucial for long-term success including employee engagement and retention.

When I started, you had to get through the hazing process and earn your way into the system. Senior employees would make the newbies mop floors, take out the trash, pump out wastewater and other meager tasks. The senior employees would ask operators to get a left-handed crescent wrench or a bucket of steam. The worst trick was sending an operator to the glass shop and telling them to pick up a *bottom oriented double take-off round top flask*. There was no such thing. The glass shop personnel would shake their head and tell the new operator they were being tricked. One glass shop employee thought he would help the new employee get back at the older operators. He had made some flasks that were impressive looking but had defects. He packaged one up and put a charge on it for $500.00. He gave it to the new operator who had no idea it was a fake. But when the pranksters got a beaker and a bill, they panicked. They had to run down to the glass shop and call off the prank. That was the last time that happened.

The trainers learned that a good training program started before the employees arrived and the orientation process needed to be professional. We created a three-week program. Leaders fully supported the time and costs because they saw the value. We treated new employees with respect. They took tours of different areas, met the directors and other leaders. They had their computer and phone accounts set up. They learned how to navigate around the site to find areas like HR, the safety office, and lab supplies. We treated them like they were beginning a career vs. a job and it made a great first impression. One new person came from a union site. He was the union president there but his building shut down and we had an opening. He was amazed that a place would put that kind of energy into new employees. He learned quickly, enjoyed the process and became an advocate for the learning process. Our vision was not to hire a ‘pair of hands’ or ‘just operators’ but to hire and build the genius into our journey. Operators in our building could learn engineering and other skills during their career and take that to future roles.

Later in my career in HR, I watched executives arrive with no onboarding plan. They hired a new vice president and someone found him lost on campus. He was frustrated because he came and no one took the time to help him find his way or even take him to lunch. He had no phone or computer.

You can accelerate employee development and their ability to contribute to their team and organization by getting employees off to a solid start during their on-boarding time.

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How would you or new employees describe their first month at work?

List two or three ways to make a great first impression with new employees.

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**Chapter 9**

True Empowerment accelerates progress

*Giving a front-line employee a project and trusting their approach accelerates improvements.*

Before you say no or judge an idea, ask several questions to ensure you understand the request. Try saying yes to employee suggestions that are beyond your comfort zone.

My supervisor assigned me to lead part of the changeover reduction project. The goal was to reduce the cleanup time from three weeks to one week. I was ‘just an operator’ and was not sure I would have much influence with this project at my level. My boss told me to try three ideas that would reduce the clean-up time, and if I did not think I could do it, he would let me try something else. I worked with the area operators to brainstorm ideas and we picked three to try. They were simple ideas that did not cost much, but the changes made it easier for the operators to clean the equipment.

We then got bold. One big task was removing rotary valves at the bottom of equipment. These valves turned and discharged product from bins. It took a mechanic, electrician and an operator four hours to remove the values. After cleaning them, it took another four hours to install them. Several of us researched different valves and found ones that operators could take out on their own in just two minutes. They did not need a mechanic or electrician. They were $25,000.00 each and we needed seven. We put together a proposal and went to the weekly leadership staff meeting to present the idea. We knew it was a long shot to get that kind of money. We presented the idea concisely and the staff had a short discussion and approved the request. I was amazed at the trust and quick response. It worked. An operator could remove all seven valves in less than 15 minutes compared to four hours. And it took only 15 minutes to reinstall them. Quite a cost but a significant value in time. Over the next year, the team made several large requests and leaders accepted all of them.

Those times were one of the most empowering times in my career. Leaders certainly need to weigh options and be prudent in expenditures. I and the others on the team learned a lot about the equipment and we based our recommendations on this knowledge. That increased the trust level. It is fantastic to see how much gets done when the right ingredients of employee development, trust, empowerment, and execution are in place. People noticed the outlaw ingenuity and we helped the research teams by not having to wait as long to run their products in our facility. We gained respect on our way to becoming in-laws.

Leaders and colleagues often challenge ideas and find reasons the ideas will not work. Try starting with a ‘Yes’ and first finding ways the idea will work. Building high-performing, interdependent teams requires a prudent but high level of risk and trust. Stretch your comfort zone.

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How bureaucratic is your organization? Does it take a long time to decide on even simple requests?

How can you implement decisions quicker you do today?

What is one area you can trust an employee to make decisions and trust their judgment?

**Chapter 10**

Way outside the box

*Challenge the status quo, try new things, take prudent risks and get excellent results.*

The role of a leader is to get their group to accomplish things they never thought possible. They need to foster the innovation vs. question it.

I was sitting in a corporate training session and met the person next to me. She trained people to service blood analyzers. She said that it used to take three months to teach technicians, but she applied adult learning techniques to her training process and could teach them the same skills in a week. Previously, they assigned the technicians to shadow experienced employees. The new folks would watch for the first few weeks and slowly begin taking apart and fixing pieces of the equipment. There were no training plans or procedures. There was no accountability for the time. She created a training lab and had many analyzers. She created training resources and diagrams. She had a clear syllabus and training approaches. New employees would work in teams for the week and go through a methodical, fun, and practical learning approach. They could diagnose and fix any problem in just one week.

I wrote down her methods and brought that back to our team. In our area, it took 18 months to learn a process before we started our training process. We had reduced the time to 12 months. I told one of the supervisors I thought we could get it to 9 months. He said for us to shoot for 6, which I at first thought was impossible. He just asked that we think about it for a day and see what was possible. We began to apply new learning approaches and it accelerated the learning time. We created fun exercises, practice quizzes. We bugged the process lines so they would not start and had the operators see if they could find the issues. The training taught them how to find the problems. They had fun going through four floors of process equipment trying to find the bugs. They could practice as much as they wanted before doing a qualifying test.

When I started, it took me almost a year to learn one process called the granulation process. It was the most challenging part of our process. We did not have a procedure, and typically the senior operators ran this process while newer operators did the manual work. I created learning resources and a two-week training schedule. My colleagues thought it was too aggressive but I kept going. I needed to test it out and Amber, a new technician, said she would try. She had been a janitor for our area, and due to her conscientious work and passing an entrance exam, they hired her to my shift. After her orientation and basic training, we started the two-week experiment. She would focus on running the granulator for two weeks and see if she could qualify on it at that time. We ran two batches each night. She did more tasks with each batch and quickly could do most of the operation on her own. We were converting powder to granules. There were many variables to watch such as airflow, heat, cooling, and water spraying. These changed during the 30-minute process, and if you did not get it right, you would lose the batch. After seven shifts, I told her it was time to make all the decisions herself, and I would only jump in if she would do something to lose the batch. Typically, we converted 250 pounds of powered into 200 pounds of good product. She ran the batch perfectly until the end. The last step was to turn off the water so the granules would stop growing and be the right size. She went about 15 seconds longer than I would have and just as I was about to say something, she turned the water off. I knew most of the product would be too large to sell. She looked at the granules and then at me and realized she had gone too long. It took a couple of hours to dry the batch and sift it. Rather than 200 pounds of good product, she got about 50 pounds. She felt terrible and thought I might get upset. I asked her for a couple of learnings and then I told her we could rework the material in the next batch and would be fine.

We were on the midnight shift and unfortunately, engineers and others could see the conversion rates from their office computers. At about shift change, they called me to the supervisor’s office. My engineer pointed to the screen showing 50 pounds of product and demanded an answer. I explained the situation. He asked why I did not jump in and cut the water off sooner. I explained that I wanted Amber to experience the full process and she needed to feel confident in running this equipment. I also told him that we had time to rework the big stuff and we were still on schedule. He told me never to do that again. It worked so well that I prudently incorporated it into many learning approaches.

Amber ran the batches for the next two nights and achieved the highest conversions of anyone. I could leave her now and have confidence in her ability. I never told her about the reprimand. People need to learn through mistakes for learning purposes. Prudent mistakes for sure but it has to be a coaching process and not a demeaning process. Amber had full confidence. She went from a janitor to a top technician. The chemist who was responsible for this product was impressed. People like Amber were shifting us from Outlaws to In-Laws. We were gaining respect. By challenging the status quo, creating great learning resources, providing structure to the training approach, and leader accountability, new technicians could learn the process in four to six months.

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What is your organization’s risk factor? Are you risk averse or to you fostering people trying new things and taking prudent risks?

How do you react when people make mistakes?

Think about ways to foster creativity and innovation and allow people the freedom to explore new ways of doing things.

**Chapter 11**

Making something great out of nothing

*A Tier 3 person can make a significant impact even in an ordinary role.*

A healthy organization or team has many Tier 3 members. Dave, ‘just an operator,’ saved millions of dollars by applying several Tier 3 approaches:

* Challenged the status quo
* Proactively initiated improvements
* Understood business strategy
* Viewed the success of the organization in addition to his success
* Focused on customers: Made an extra effort to please internal and external customers
* Allowed his knowledge to be accessible when he left

Dave moved from an operator role to a day job. He was responsible for ordering our building supplies. It was a routine, tedious job but he could work better hours. Dave started as a janitor in our building. He worked hard and they promoted him to an operator role. He became a top operator quickly. After moving into the supply ordering role, he discovered how to take a mundane job and make it exciting and impactful. He saved millions of dollars. Instead of seeing the position as ordering supplies, he found ways to make the job efficient, reduce inventories, find used equipment or less expensive vendors and ensured we had the right supplies and spare parts when needed.

Our storage area was messy. There were parts from the equipment we no longer had. Some parts were double-ordered because we could not find them. Dave cleaned out the storage area and created an electronic tracking process. He reduced the parts inventory level by 50%. Dave worked with area engineers and supervisors to identify critical spare parts and ensured they were on hand for a breakdown. He found less expensive vendors. And, he discovered companies that had used parts or overstocked products and ordered materials at reduced prices. He also sold our unneeded equipment adding revenue to our building.

A tier 3 person does not just do a job but finds ways to maximize the position and make it efficient. They do not settle for the status quo, but challenge established tasks to improve them. Dave helped move the Outlaws to In-laws. He also helped many of the manufacturing sites we supported to reduce costs. He created a user manual to make it easy for others to step into his role and learn it quickly. A Tier 1 or 2 person might not be concerned if the successor struggled after they left.

As a leader and coach, a goal is to help employees see their work in this way. Some employees will naturally do their job in a Tier 3 approach. Others can make the switch with some guidance and coaching. Some may not want to do that and possibly they are in the wrong position. Imagine a team with ten Dave’s on it all focused on this type of improvement. That would be an impressive, productive team. His orderly process saved hundreds of hours of looking for parts. He instantly knew if we had something and where it was. He also ensured we had the critical parts if something broke down so we did not have to wait for days and lose production time.

Dave was regularly promoted over his career and is in a senior global sourcing role saving millions of dollars for the entire company.

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Tier 3 employees find ways to make the most out of their role to help the team and business succeed. Leaders create the atmosphere to help employees understand this work approach and make the shift.

List a few employees that are similar to Dave’s Tier 3 approach.

How do you coach employees who have potential to apply Tier 3 approaches?

**Chapter 12**

Development plans that create Tier 3 employees

*You need this approach to truly unleash the potential of your team.*

Training is different than development. *Training* is often a one-time event and *development* involves many experiences. High performing people and teams continually expand their knowledge. This approach helps them shift toward Interdependence which drives business improvements.

In New Reality Leadership, we show how to shift an organization from Dependent to Independent to Interdependent. We define what that means and highlight how organizations increase profits as they make this shift. One ingredient is for *every employee* to have a development plan. Not a Training Plan but a Development Plan. Training is essential but is only a piece of development. If you take music or golf lessons, you get a 30-60- minute time in training with an instructor. You spend hours between lessons, practice, reading, listening to others, watching other great performers. Becoming great involves many experiences beyond training. However, in our fast-paced world, it is easy to measure if someone attended a training course. They participate, check off that they went, and put that on their year-end accomplishment report.

The plan may involve training, but it also includes other experiences, coaching, and mentoring. The leaders of the outlaws understood this approach. Engineers and leaders often have plans, but few manufacturing sites ask operators or technicians to create a plan. The outlaw leaders did and did a great job of coaching folks and supporting them to achieve the goals. Here are some of the things people did:

* Went to specialized training on a type of equipment and became the building or corporate expert to train others
* Traveled to other sites to help them start up a new process we had tested
* Hosted tours for the CEO, VPs, and directors (it is uncommon for operators to talk to a CEO, but the outlaw leaders had operators show these folks around and explain the business focus)
* Run large projects. One person ran a 3-million-dollar equipment installation project
* Work with local community colleges to build operator training curriculum
* Attend global webinars to present building enhancements that other sites could use
* Design and lead safety meetings or other training
* Attend public speaking training and give talks to various groups

You get the idea. This “pair of hands” group had a ton of talent. Leaders mined the talent, and they got incredible results. If this group stayed in the Outlaw approach, they would have worked their 8 hours and gone home. Instead, they understood the business, developed high technical and interpersonal skills (Tier 3), and took ownership of improving the business. They became In-laws.

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Developing employees fully requires stretch assignments and projects in addition to training.

What is your philosophy on development?

What opportunities do you have for front-line employees to expand their skills? Try new things?

What is one practical way to shift employees from Dependent to Interdependence?

**Chapter 13**

My knowledge is my power

*Some people feel that holding on to knowledge increases their value and job security. It does the opposite and creates drama and conflict in teams.*

Interdependent people and teams do not hold onto knowledge; they help everyone learn.

A Tier 3 approach is to learn new skills *and* help others to acquire them. Some people like to hold on to knowledge to feel valued or to ensure job security. When I trained, I helped others learn as much as possible quickly. One colleague told me to slow down. If I gave away all my knowledge, they would not need me any longer. I had a different approach. I learned what I could and then made it easier for others to learn. I could then delegate work to them and I developed some employees to be future trainers. As I freed up time, I took on more expansive roles. After I organized the training for my area, I had time to support other manufacturing sites to improve their training. I traveled once a month to present workshops and coach trainers. I supported the corporate group to enhance their approaches and then had time to take on other projects. The skills I obtained in those years helped me get into the corporate training and development role and future roles. A Tier 3 person is not threatened by other’s success and delights in other’s success.

One person was an expert on a piece of equipment. This equipment was also in other sites around the world. The expert created a procedure to run it and some troubleshooting tips. He told me that he did not put all of the knowledge in there. He wanted to be the building and corporate expert for this equipment. He traveled to sites to help them fix the machine. He got many hours of overtime. He loved it. My philosophy was to help others to be entirely independent in tasks so if I moved on, they would not miss a beat.

Captain Michael Abrashoff wrote the book called It’s Your Ship. He was the captain of one boat in the fleet. He talks about great leadership approaches he used to transform the ship from the worst to best ship in the Navy. He used the same leadership principles we use in New Reality Leadership. When I read the book, though, he was missing one Tier 3 attribute. He was in a competition with the other ships to outdo them and be the best. While reading the book, I kept waiting for him to begin helping his fellow captains learn his approaches but the book ended. In his follow-up books, he realized this short coming and acknowledges that leadership is about being your best and helping others maximize their approach.

Drive to accomplish your passions. Do not have as your first goal to be the best. Be the best you can be and help others to rise to their potential. That is a Tier 3 approach that helps you and helps the organization maximize their performance.

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Interdependent people and teams do not hold onto knowledge; they help everyone learn.

How do you share knowledge with others and coach others to share knowledge? Do you recognize the hero for saving the day or do you appreciate them when they develop others to solve critical issues?

**Chapter 14**

We may not see the final fruits of our labors

*We may spend years developing employees and not personally see or reap the value.*

Many people like work where they see immediate results of their labors. They sell, build, improve things and get rewarded. As a person transitions into a leadership role, their rewards may take longer, are less tangible, and, in some cases, they may not see the final fruit of their efforts. Leaders have to become comfortable with this possibility.

In 1999, we shut down the Outlaw building due to a change in business direction. I moved to a corporate talent management role and taught leadership sessions. Most of the other outlaws ended up in different buildings or labs. Each month I conducted a leadership session at our local training center. I often had a participant who became the leader of an outlaw. Without fail, they always had terrific compliments for these people. I would get comments like:

* These technicians’ abilities were way above our technicians.
* They had the skill of engineers
* What kind of training and development did you all do there to produce this caliber of employee?
* The leadership there knew how to develop people
* I wish I had ten outlaws
* They are great team players
* These guys adapt to change almost instantly and take charge of it
* An interdependent person who understands the business side

Even employees that were not as engaged or strong in our building were at a different level than many others. The Outlaw leaders led in ways to develop employees beyond being a pair of hands. They expected growth and coached each person to new levels. Many of the outlaws did get promoted. Some become supervisors, IT consultants or leaders, and others moved to senior leadership roles at a site. The building leaders had a New Reality mindset. However, many Outlaw leaders may not know the impact they had on these employees. I just happened to be in a position to meet their subsequent managers and hear the positive results.

There was no formal leadership approach in this building. The leaders applied good practices and got results. My vision for New Reality Leadership is that we can accelerate this type of leadership approach if we build it into our vision and strategy. We reduced technical training from 18 months to 6 months because it was part of the vision and leaders provided the tools and accountability to make it happen. We need to replicate this leadership and team approach in businesses today to stay competitive.

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Develop employees to be the best they can be. In many cases, you or they may move to other roles and you will not see the fruit of your labor. Learn to be comfortable doing the right thing even if there is no tangible reward.

What is something you are doing today that you know is right but you may not get credit for it this year or maybe ever?

**Chapter 15**

The Outlaws were not perfect by any means

*Even the best organizations have challenges, and we had many.*

Often, in these types of books, it looks like a group went from the worst to the perfect team. Even with the best transformations, there are warts and issues. These challenges will always exist. The key is to stay the course and keep finding the next areas to improve.

We made a tremendous shift during the 15 years I was an outlaw. But we were not perfect. We could have written a sitcom about the strange things that occurred. Some employees did all they could to get out of work. Some ran outside businesses while at work. We had the typical drug and alcohol issues. Midnight shift employees would clock in and then find a place to sleep. In the early years, it often took too long to address these situations and they would drain the group. Leaders learned how to set standards and hold people accountable and manage performance professionally. Those leadership skills are essential to building a high-performing organization. We had a mix of employees from dependent (Tier 1) to independent (Tier 2) to Interdependent (Tier 3). However, we were learning and shifting toward Tier 3 approaches. In most organizations, there are those who are satisfied with staying in Tier 2. They may do their job well but not work beyond the basic expectations.

In 1999, we had a massive downsizing due to a business change. Our building had to cut 50% of the people. At that time, we had 26 operators. I had a list of these operators and did a quick evaluation listing them in order of what I thought were top to lower performers. The top performances all had high functional skills and many tier 3 work approaches. For example, they helped others learn, took charge of change personally, had great internal and external networks, knew the business side of the work, and did not settle for the status quo but always found ways to improve the area. The middle group had good operating skills and some tier 3 approaches. The bottom third had OK skills but not as broad as the others and did not have many tier 3 characteristics. As we waited for the announcements, it was interesting that the lower performing employees knew they were in jeopardy. Jobs were secure until this time so people thought they could do an OK job and survive. The organization reduced people based on performance and not seniority.

Leaders were coaching employees toward high-performing, tier 3 approaches (we did not call it tier 3 then). You lead a horse to water but cannot force them to drink. However, even the ones that left were strong performers compared to other parts of the organization. Most found jobs in other company plant sites or labs. I knew the supervisors and would ask how these outlaws were doing. In all cases, the supervisors complimented the ex-outlaw and said they had higher skills and work approaches than their employees.

Our building leaders led with a mindset to create a high-performing, engaged and empowered team. Even with the frustrations and setbacks, it was interesting to watch how many outlaws went on to make a significant difference in the company in their subsequent roles. Many outlaws were promoted to higher-level positions and contributed significantly to the company’s performance. And remember, we were hired not to think or expect promotions.

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Developing an organization takes time and often we do not see immediate results.

If you have a disciplined approach to development, people will notice a difference. Don’t be frustrated by the resistant few.

What do you like most and least about your team? Let the team know what you appreciate. Find one thing you can control to improve your frustration area.

**Chapter 16**

Reverting from an Engaging to Dominating leadership style = disaster

*What happens when you shift from an engaging and empowering leadership style to a profit-driven dominating approach? An Increase in turnover from 15% to 75%. A significant drop in sales. Out of business.*

There is a tremendous cost associated with dominating leadership. Individuals, teams, and companies disintegrate.

Diverting back to the Eckerd Drug Store management days, it only took two days at Eckerd Drug as an assistant manager to predict it would falter and go out of business. Before I applied and interviewed with this drug chain, I talked with employees, managers, and HR to see how they liked the company. They all said it was an excellent place to work. The hiring process took almost a year, and strange changes took place during that year. They moved the Delaware regional office to somewhere in the south. Jack Eckerd focused on employee satisfaction and making it a great place to work. He stepped down a few years earlier and the new leaders drove profits first. They had a short-term financial focus. That meant we had to cut employee hours and managers worked longer hours. Turnover increased steadily. We could not serve the customer. One marketing plan for customers said, “Second to none, you’re number one.” The employee was last so we could not support the customer well.

One day, our district manager came to the store. We always warned each other when we knew he was coming. He was a dominating, demeaning leader. I spent extra time to ensure the store was perfect. When he arrived, he looked at me and nodded which meant it was time to walk the store and find all the issues. We walked every aisle; he did not say a word. At the end of the last aisle, he stopped and stared at a box that was pushed back from the edge. He pointed to it slowly and said, “That box is out of place!” He walked out with no other comments.

I lasted two years. With so many people leaving, our service was terrible. Sales dropped, and the Eckerd name is now history. If you study organizations like The Container Store, they have a proven engagement strategy. The top priority is the employee, even before the customer. The philosophy is that making the employee happy and competent allows them to fully server the customer. Customers buy and meet the revenue demands. And, the shareholders smile. Many companies today serve the shareholders first and the employee last. This causes higher turnover and lower profits. In the US, higher wages and lower productivity lowers competitiveness so many companies move off shore.

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Making employees first or at least a high priority is a business success factor.

Who is first in your organization?

What leadership style do leaders use primarily in your organization?

Would your employees say they look forward to being at work each day?

You can increase profits and see smiles on employee and customer’s faces. Eckerd Drug temporarily improved profits but with few smiles from employees and customers. Without engaged, empowered employees and with waning customers, they could not sustain the gains and eventually went out of business.

**Chapter 17**

Why are they not excited about our great vision?

*Leaders talk and determine strategy and vision. They then tell employees the direction and wonder why there are blank stares and resistance. Engaging employees in the plan and how to achieve it builds engagement and gets you further in the journey.*

Our supervisor scheduled a special meeting. There were five operating areas in our building and most people worked in one area only. The supervisor informed the employees that they had to cross train into at least one other area during the next six months. The meeting ended, and the operators walked out confused and grumbling. I could see the confusion and knew why. I went to the supervisor and asked if he picked up on the resistance that occurred. He had not. I shared that they were not happy and did not understand why they had to cross train. He said it was obvious and they were going to have to get on board. I asked him a few other questions and he realized the challenge. Here is how the conversation went:

Me: Why do they need to cross train?

Him: We need to be flexible.

Me: Why do we need to be flexible?

Him: We need to run more products.

Me: Why do we need to run more products?

Him: Research has more products to run than we can handle.

Me: What is the urgency to run more products?

Him: It is taking us too long to get our products to market. Our competitors can get a product to market in five years and it takes us seven years. If we can run more products, we can help the business get to market sooner. This improvement would make a huge impact on sales and profits.

Me: Call the group back and tell them this story. You have spent months with leaders discussing this need and challenge. These operators do not understand the connection of this request and the business impact.

He called them back and explained the issue and opportunity. Once the operators knew the challenge, they began to identify many ideas in addition to cross training that would allow us to run more products.

Leaders spend time understanding the reasons behind strategy changes but often do not share the goals with employees. If leaders would share the challenge and, rather than give the solution, ask employees for ideas, they would achieve higher results. They would get less resistance and higher engagement. Over time, leaders shared much of the business needs and challenges with all employees and engaged them for ideas. We improved our operation and continue to increase our value to the business.

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Let employees know the ‘Why’ behind decisions. Include them in how to be part of a vision vs. telling them the vision only.

Share the reasons behind change with employees?

What type of culture do you have? Resistant or engaged? Could telling vs. engaging people be one reason for resistance?

What is one thing you can share with employees to help them understand the WHY of the work they are doing?

**Chapter 18**

Speaking of resistance

*How to turn total resistance into full engagement and excitement in less than two minutes.*

Out of all the leadership principles I learned, this approach changed my life at work and at home. I could turn around a resistant situation with those I led or taught and even with my teenagers (well, most of the time).

Since we were trying to reduce the time it took to get products to market, the operators worked on reducing how long it took to clean the equipment so we could run more products. They had hundreds of ideas and we spent several years working on them. Not everyone was excited at first. One project involved finding ways to get rid of bolts and replacing flanges and lids with clamps. In one process area, we had 100 feet of piping that had 200 bolts to remove for each cleanup. It took four hours to take the pipe apart and four hours to reassemble it. We worked with a vendor to replace the flange ends with clamped ends. We had two operators take the piping apart and we timed them. It took 18 minutes; they were excited. After cleaning the pipes, two people tried to put it back together. After 20 minutes they quit and told us to put the bolts back on. The clamps were too hard to work, and it took four people to install the clamp. I was discouraged at first, but I asked one person, who was resistant and critical of new ideas if he had a thought on how to fix it. He thought and came up with a few ideas. I called the vendor and had the operator explain the suggestions. They came up with an adjustment that worked. Two operators could now reassemble the piping in 25 minutes. Interestingly, this resistant operator became an advocate for the entire project and since others tended to take his lead, they also became engaged.

Outlaw leaders shifted from the early days from telling to asking. From dictating to engaging and empowering. It reduced resistance and improved business performance. This approach also led to the high individual and team performance.

This approach is perhaps the easiest but least used. I was teaching a leadership workshop at a plant site. On the first morning, a person arrived at 7:45 and sat in the back of the room and turned his chair to the back. I introduced myself to him and offered him coffee. He was not happy to be there. He said he was told to come but only knew it was something on leadership. He said, “no offense to you but I have been a supervisor for 20 years and what are you going to teach me in three days I do not already know”? I had to think fast but my answer changed not only his attitude but my entire coaching and teaching approach. I told him that I was not a teacher but a facilitator. I did not have all the answers and I counted on experienced leaders helping share ideas and life learnings in the session to help the newer leaders. I asked if he would see himself as a coach in the next three days rather than a learner and share ideas when appropriate. He grunted, and I moved on to meet the other 20 people. That conversation took 45 seconds. At 8 am when I started, I noticed he was in the front and in a better mood. During the three days, it was awesome to see his approach. He was engaged and enthusiastic and added stories and insights along the way. When we closed the session, each person provided a closing comment. Here is what he said:

I did not want to be here, but this was the greatest experience of my career. I did not realize I could learn so much. I only have two years until I retire, and I was coasting to the finish. Now, I see a new mission for the two years. I understand how I can coach and mentor newer leaders to grow and take this site to the next level. I am excited and plan to learn, develop and help others for these next two years and then I have a longer-term mission to help my grandkids grow and learn similar approaches.

An incredible turnaround in 45 seconds. I have dozens of these stories but will share one for now. The outlaw leaders grew in wisdom to understand that doing things *with* employees gets better results and engagement than doing things *to* employees. I learned from watching some of them as they interacted with employees. I was responsible for training and I created computerized tests that operators took as part of their qualification. I was working in my office and a person named Big Jim barged in, threw his test and notes on my desk and said, “I’VE GOT A PROBLEM. Your training and tests are terrible! I took a test and I got all the right answers, but the computer failed me. Now I have to do the entire thing over. I QUIT!” This person was bigger than I and stood towering over me. He was unorthodox in his approaches but was a genius and learned quickly. I had to think quick again, so I told him I loved problems and asked him to show me the issue. I logged into the test and he showed me the one he got wrong. I had programmed in the wrong answer. He was right, but the computer marked him wrong. The question was also confusing. I asked him for a suggestion to improve it and we rewrote it together. He got up still mad and said he now had to spend 20 more minutes retaking the test. I told him I passed him in the computer and he could move to the next module. I also asked him to critique other test questions and materials for improvements. He had a perplexed look on his face and said thanks and left. 30 minutes later I had to go out to his operating area and I saw two operators doing their training. I asked them if they had been to lunch and they said no. Big Jim came out and said they were not allowed to go to lunch until they completed the next module. I had a two-minute conversation with a totally resistant person to transform them into an engaged proponent of the training approach. Being open to their ideas improved the training and most people enjoyed the experience. This interaction became a pivotal point for shifting people toward interdependence. Big Jim was influential. He advocated training to others and accelerated the learning in our building. Learning is a foundation for changing a culture toward interdependence.

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Value employees for the skills they have and enroll them as coaches and experts where possible. Most employees want to be involved.

How do people in your team react when they face resistance? Understanding their need and asking for ideas often reduces the tension and creates a collaborate path forward.

What kind of resistance do you face? Consider enrolling people to be part of the solution and let them know you appreciate their views and expertise.

**Chapter 19**

Reacting to Failure

*Perhaps this one leadership trait is the most impactful of all; either negatively or positively*

Learning to be competent in this one skill can make or break your leadership effectiveness, your team and even your business.

I was consulting at one of our sites and met the team at 8 am Monday morning. They were despondent. They told me that their leader had just spent time screaming at them. They were told to make a certain amount of a product over the weekend but realized they did not have the ingredients for that product. They called in a rush order but it would not show up until Monday. So, they made the next product instead and then would catch up when the ingredient came in. They thought it was a prudent action so did not call the area manager for approval. The area manager came in and saw the wrong product on the shipping dock and started screaming for several minutes and walked away.

After the meeting, one foreman told her the story and why they did not call her but made the decision. She realized they had done the right thing and apologized. However, during the next year, no one made any questionable decisions without calling her even at 3 am. The initial reaction of a leader, if harsh, gets embedded in people’s minds and it is almost impossible to erase. This behavior shifts employees back to the dependent phase and the leader ends up being involved in all decisions again.

What happens after the initial reaction is a different leadership skill and involves feedback and performance management. But the initial response is what can make or break the situation. My daughter was helping me cut tree limbs on our property and was learning to drive our large tractor. She hit a fence post resulting in a hundred-dollar tractor repair. She felt terrible and got off the tractor to let me take over. I calmly told her to get back on and keep learning because we just invested a hundred-dollars in her training. She gained confidence and skill and can independently use the tractor today. A friend told me when he was young he did the same thing. His father yelled and told him to get off the tractor. That was the last time he used it. An error might be cause for a disciplinary measure which again is another skill focus. Learn to take a breath, listen, inquire and find all the facts before you address a situation. Many teams have the potential to work in the interdependent, high-performing culture but act in the dependent stage due to the leader’s reaction to mistakes.

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Reacting negatively to mistakes is a main reason high-potential teams revert back to working in a dependent mode.

When people make a mistake, what is your initial reaction?

What is one thing you can do to shift the way you react if your first response is negative?

**Chapter 20**

What does an Interdependent Organization look like?

*Every high performing, sustained organization works in the Interdependence Stage*

At Hardee’s, we shifted the team from Dependence to Independence. From Chaos to Stability. From leaders making every decision to employees able to run much of the day-to-day activities. I began to think about how to get the group to the third stage or Interdependence. I envisioned transitioning an ordinary and stable restaurant to an extraordinary experience. I mapped out ideas and talked with the owners. We needed to develop employees to be functional experts and to gain Tier 3 skills. One idea I had was to partner with the University of Delaware’s business department and get a group of interns to work at the restaurant and each focus on one improvement idea to improve quality and sales. Maybe one person works with the community for marketing. Another finds ways to decrease customer wait times. One could focus on reducing utility costs. I suggested we start a Hardee’s University and if an employee enrolled, we would train them on higher skills and pay them for their learning and performance. That is the mindset of creating an Interdependent, high-performance culture. The owners were not excited, though, and we did not make that shift.

At DuPont, I met a group of extraordinary technicians in another business. Their leader was amazing. He developed them, engaged them for improvements and empowered them. These ‘just lab technicians’ ran the place. They supported a set of products and would travel to a customer location to help them with issues. They worked to improve product designs and had many patents. The leader had time to expand the customer base and focus on high-end improvements. He got promoted and a new leader pulled back all decision-making rights and would not allow them to travel or make any decisions. Where he came from, lab technicians did the lab work; chemists and engineers did the thinking and higher project work. Until the new leader came, the group was entirely in the Interdependent, high-performing stage. After only a couple months, while they still had the skills and ability to work interdependently, they shifted back to the dependent stage and did not make any decisions without the approval of the leader.

The role of a leader or leadership team is to shift their organization from dependence to independence and then interdependence. Many leadership teams do not have a conscious plan or vision to accomplish this shift. In New Reality Leadership, we share many cases where leaders led a positive transformation toward Interdependence or where just a few negative behaviors shifted teams back to the dependent stage.

Describe your team or organization. What stage are they in? If they are not in the Interdependent stage, what would it look like if you could shift the group to that level?

**Chapter 21**

Aligned leadership is essential

*All leaders in an organization must align with the vision and the desired culture for change to occur.*

After moving into HR and teaching our leadership classes, when a manufacturing site would ask for leadership training, I would show up and hope that the leaders prepared participants for the session and the leaders had a vision for the development time. Often, there was no alignment among leadership levels and that negatively impacted the learning.

I initially trained the first-line leaders. They would get excited but their leaders would not be as excited. As I matured, I conducted meetings with the site staff first to share the leadership philosphy and skill focus and to ensure they supported it. I also required them to attend and facilitate parts of the courses. They resisted at first but realized the power of that approach. Leaders teaching others is essential to create an interdependent organization.

I tried this approach with one business. The leaders asked me to teach the chemists leadership skills. Chemists and engineers are brilliant, but often they are not hired with or expected to have leadership skills. The chemists typically had one or two lab technicians reporting to them. Some led fine while others drove their technicians crazy. I knew this business and their leadership approach. The senior leaders were hierarchical and stated that lab technicians were a pair of hands only. They did not need to know anything except how to run the experiments. They were not sent to training and did not have development plans. Technicians did not get promoted. Since my leadership philosophy was different, I asked to meet with the leadership team first to explain the training and to ensure they wanted this approach to engage and empower technicians to grow toward the interdependent stage. I shared a few of the things written in this book and then watched a 30-minute argument take place. A few new leaders thought my approach would help the floundering business. The senior leaders resisted my proposal. They talked for a couple of days and reluctantly agreed to have me do the session. The chemists loved it. They agreed that this should be part of their first-year development. One person said he worked for 35 years as a chemist and no one had ever shown him this approach. The chemists returned to work with excitement that the senior leaders quickly drained from them. The business faltered and disbanded within the next couple years.

All levels of an organization must be aligned and focused on the same goals if they are to shift toward creating an interdependent culture.

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Building strong organizations requires building interdependent organizations. Leaders must align on the leadership approach and leaders need to be coaches and teachers.

Describe your leadership development focus and approach. Are front-line to senior leaders aligned on the vision and goals?

What is one thing your group could incorporate to improve leadership alignment?

**Chapter 22**

Giving away knowledge

*Many experts fear sharing too much with others because they want to be the go-to person.*

I began playing the trumpet in 5th grade. I was the last seat but by 7th grade, I moved to the first seat. I liked the view. A new person moved into our school that played trumpet and he was in the 10th seat. I had not met him yet. We all had to play a short solo during the first week and when he played, it was amazing. He was accomplished at the college level already. I knew he would take the first seat and was upset at first about this. After a month, I began to let go of the prestige and learned from him. I never achieved his skill but learned more than I would have if he were not there.

When I was doing the technical operations training, people viewed me as the area expert. There was pressure to ensure I had all the answers. I began training a new employee. He was sharp and found mistakes in the training and had operation insights and knowledge I did not have. At first, I felt threatened, but I remembered the trumpet days. I chose to see this person as a way to enhance the training vs. fear his skill. I realized that if I trained him well, he might become the area expert. I grew comfortable with this possibility and taught him as quickly as he could absorb the information. We learned together, I enhanced my understanding, and we improved the training materials together.

In subsequent roles in my career, I tried to learn as much as I could and in some cases became a corporate expert. Rather than hold on to knowledge to keep the expert status, I documented and shared as much information as I could and at times consciously helped others become the go-to person. In every case, I then had time to develop a new competency and expand my ability to contribute. A Tier 3 person shares knowledge and does not fear the success of others. This formula helps employees grow their skills and the performance of the organization.

If you experience drama and conflicts in your group, one reason may be the fear people have of losing their career edge. In reality, we increase our value by helping others learn which helps grow the business.

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Learn to be comfortable helping others grow and learn even if they move ahead of you.

Are you the go-to expert in your field? What are you doing to make that information available to others and coach others to become experts?

**Chapter 23**

Prepared for the CEO

*If your CEO walked in to your area and asked for a tour, what would be your first reaction?*

As a leader, if you and your group are always prepared to host the CEO or the president of your country for a tour, you are automatically infusing strong leadership principles.

If your boss, director or CEO asked for ride to the airport, would you be comfortable with the cleanliness of your car or would you have to scramble to make it presentable? A friend, Dan, told me he interviewed for a job and one of the questions asked about his organizational skills. He described his approaches to the satisfaction of the interviewer. They both went to lunch and when they got to the parking lot, the interviewer said he had left his car keys inside and asked if Dan would mind driving. Dan agreed, and they went to the restaurant. After he hired Dan, the interviewer told him that this approach was part of the interview. The interviewer wanted to see if Dan was organized and orderly and knew that how a person keeps their car is indicative of how they do many things in life. Dan’s car was clean and not cluttered.

President Bush visited several Wilmington area DuPont sites while president. I talked to one lab supervisor where Bush was visiting. They had just a week’s notice and had to scramble to spruce up the place. They laid out his tour path and then painted those areas, replaced the carpet, cleaned out the labs, and other things to ensure it was perfect. I wondered why they had not done those things before? If it was not ready for the president, it really was not ready for the employees.

Have you visited a restaurant and found the restroom in poor shape and not clean? Did you wonder if they apply the same approach to preparing the food? Leadership is about being ‘Tour Ready’. It is doing things in a disciplined way that you could open the door and be instantly ready to show anyone your area and be proud of it. In the early years as an Outlaw, we would spend a lot of time preparing for senior leader or customer tours. We dreaded these because of all the hoops we jumped through. One of the leadership principles that emerged was to run our operation as if the CEO or vice president could show up and do an instant tour and we would be ready. We were not always perfect but having this mindset created a disciplined approach that also impacted our overall performance.

Having this approach sets into motion many foundations for effective leadership without evening thinking about it. How you approach anything is really how you approach everything. Having a steady, methodical approach to all of your systems will impact your bottom line. I took my tractor in to have a tire replaced. Where I sat, I could see the shop area and the mechanic working. The shop was filled with junk and old parts. It was dirty and dingy. He could not find the right tools or the right jack for the tractor. A 10-minute job took him 90 minutes. With a little cleaning and organization, he could have done three or four jobs in that 90 minutes. The same applies to our people and business.

If you were having guests for dinner tonight, how much cleaning would you feel compelled to do?

What is one area that is disorganized and could be improved?

Would you say your group runs more chaotically or more stable?

**Chapter 24**

Create smiling faces while you drive business improvement.

Applying this mindset automatically improves many leadership skills.

Stephen Covey said, “Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers.” Our employees may also be our customers or may refer others. When I started at the Hardees restaurant, I told my family and friends to stay away until I could make improvements. Many organizations treat employees, contractors, and vendors poorly. In one employee culture survey, a question asked if the employee would recommend the company to a friend or family member. One person commented that he would not because his leaders treated him and his team so poorly that he would not want others to endure that. This company downsized people constantly and would often walk them to the door even with many years of dedicated service.

One sourcing person said their strategy was to get payments from customers as fast as possible but to delay payments to vendors and other contractors for as long as 90 days. In this company, contractors and vendors were customers of many products.

The goal of The Container Store is to make the employee experience exceptional, treat them like their best customers, and keep a smile on their face. They also create win-win negotiations with vendors knowing that vendors may be customers and an extension of their business.

Put smiles on employees faces while you grow your business. Smiles help you get there faster. Effective leaders make employees smile.

What do your leaders do that make you smile?

Where would employees rate your organization today?

  

**Chapter 25**

Conclusion

The Outlaw operators shifted from a pair of hands to an incredible asset for their building, business and future roles. Leaders moved from initially being hierarchical to engaging and empowering. Eckerd Drug shifted from an engaging, fun place to work to one dominated by many demanding and often demeaning leaders. Turnover skyrocketed, business dropped, and it went out of business. Hardees increased revenues 2.5 times by merely training employees and giving them some empowerment. Revenues might have skyrocketed if they had done the rest of the things in this book.

It took the outlaws 10-15 years to make this shift. Suppose we could capture the ingredients for this transformation and help other organizations make the change in a couple of years. Rather than letting the high-performing team evolve, *consciously drive the improvement*. We developed New Reality Leadership to do that. The process provides the blueprint, tools, and approaches to help a leader maximize team performance by applying a Tier 3 approach and then coaching their team to an interdependent stage, or Tier 3. We designed it so leaders do not spend hours of time in training but learn while they lead. We help them first connect to meaningful business challenges and then apply the practical side of leadership to improve the problem.

Many business owners and shareholders do not care about the fluffy stuff of interpersonal skills. They want the money. Many business owners and managers don’t have the energy to grow individuals or teams to the Interdependent Stage just for fun. However, interdependent teams are the key to business improvement.

We show how to take the fluff out of leadership and connect it immediately to frustrations, business challenges, and practical ways to improve the area. One business reduced defects by one million dollars a month and increased output. They spent a few hours together, applied several New Reality approaches and the defects disappeared in three months. Part of creating an independent and eventually an interdependent team is to develop the front line, engage them for ideas, and empower them to make decisions. The leadership team in this area previously had not asked the operators for their opinions. The leaders put a visual board in the control room and made the issue visible to all employees. They engaged the employees for ideas and asked them to list how much good product and defective product they produced. By making the issue visible in a non-threatening way and asking for input, the operators and others generated many ideas which eliminated the problem. In this case, there was no formal training or hours in a classroom learning ‘fluffy’ skills. While it is not always this straightforward, I could list many improvement examples based on applying one of the leadership principles.

Think about your business and its culture. Are you where you want to be? Discover how a few shifts in leadership behaviors yield enormous business improvements. Create a New Reality for you and your organization.

See if you can articulate why an interdependent, or Tier 3 person or team is a foundation for maximizing your business performance.

**Closing Perspective**

A boy watched a cocoon as a butterfly tried to emerge. He observed it for several hours and how the butterfly struggled to make progress. He thought he would help by making the little opening bigger so the butterfly could get out. It worked, and the butterfly crawled out. He anticipated the butterfly taking flight, but it continued only to crawl. He showed his mom and she explained that while it was a nice thought to help the butterfly, the process of getting out of the cocoon was what strengthened the wings to enable it to fly.

Our goal as leaders is to provide experiences and challenges to help employees grow and develop to fly on their own. Find out more in our website.

New Reality Leadership

[www.newrealityleadership.com](http://www.newrealityleadership.com)

See if you can articulate the answers to these questions that we introduced in the beginning of the book.

1. What is an Interdependent person, team, or organization and why is shifting to Interdependence critical to improving profits?
2. What is the Tier Model? What are the 21 Tier 3 Characteristics of high-performing employees? How do Tier 3 employees and teams positively impact business improvement?
3. What does true empowerment look like? What are a few ways you can engage and empower employees and teams with minimal cost and efforts?
4. What are a few leadership behaviors that that can unleash employee engagement and performance to increase business profits?