

Inspirational Leadership

What It Means to Inspire Others

One of the most important and often difficult competencies to achieve as a leader is the ability to be Inspiring. Becoming an inspirational leader means that I forget about my own need to achieve and be recognized, and instead focus on enabling and empowering others to do their very best work. I must be able to communicate a vision or create a picture of the future that is so compelling that people are excited to be part of it and desperately want to contribute to the outcome. The work of becoming an inspiring leader is not easy, but it is incredibly rewarding. Inspirational leadership starts with getting clear on your own individual Purpose—one that aligns to your values and the core of who you are and the impact you want to have. One that is so inspiring and meaningful to you that it allows you to not only overcome barriers, but also to do so in a way that is consistently empowering you to do your best and most brilliant work!

What Does It Mean to Inspire Others?

This Individual...

- Is an authentic leader. She knows who she is, what she believes, and behaves in accordance with those values (**Purpose Impact Statement**)
- Regardless of how “tough” her behavior, standards or style, balances them with genuine warmth and compassion
- Brings out the best in people and teams
- Effectively engages and inspires the commitment, collaboration and contributions of others (versus trying to do it all herself)
- Stimulates strong commitment to collective efforts through praise and recognition of individual contributions

*Inspire comes from Latin word *inspirare* which means to breathe into. So, through Inspiration, we are breathing into those around us to enable and empower them to reach their higher potential. We are drawing others into it.



Reflection Questions

- What does "inspire" mean to you?
- Who has inspired you, and what was their impact on you?
- What did they do that was inspiring?



What Gets in the Way of Being an Inspirational Leader?



1. Proving My Value

Reflection Questions

- Where in your life or job are you over-rowing the boat?
- What are you doing?
- For the sake of what are you doing this?



2. Inner Voice

Key Learning Point: My Inner Voice

Our inner voice talks to us all day. Sometimes it has a positive tone and says nice things about ourselves and others; other times, it has a negative tone and is not so nice. In fact, some would say that we have an inner voice that shows up called the “saboteur.” It can trick us into believing what it is saying is true or that it is protecting us with its banter, but the truth is, it is often not. It is incredibly important for us to become deeply self-aware of how we are talking to ourselves. The science is clear on this: what we think and feel drives what we say and do. So for any behavior we want to change, it starts with becoming aware of our thinking.

Some call the positive inner voice the Sage, the one that speaks to us from a place of compassion, wisdom and curiosity. You can call that voice whatever you like; the key is to be aware that you need this type of self-talk to drive a more desirable impact and bring joy and positivity into your life. This is the inner voice that you want to hear in your head most often, and many of us we will need to replace our current inner voice with this new voice. This will require significant intention in the beginning and high repetition.

As human beings, we have a strong tendency toward fear. By becoming aware of our inside voice and really hearing it without judgment, we can move from fear to courage. The biggest obstacle is to recognize when this voice is impacting our behaviors in ways that do not serve us. We all have a strong Judge or Inner Critic, which is not a helpful thing. Sometimes, we mistake the coaching of the Critic or Judge as helpful when it is not. For example: you make a mistake, the critic says you are not smart enough for this role, or you are incapable, and it is often harsh. The Sage asks what the opportunity is in this mistake, and comes from a place of curiosity and compassion. Both will drive behavior change in you, but the Sage does it in a way that keeps you in the smart, optimistic part of your brain. This is important for coming up with creative, collaborative and different ways of doing it next time. The Critic or Judge does the opposite, and you end up in the part of your brain that does not allow for this kind of thinking. The result is that you go through life in survival mode instead of truly thriving.



Sometimes, you have every right to want to complain and be upset about what you deal with day to day. But you have to ask yourself: Will this help me achieve what really matters to me? How does this serve me in getting better, in making the best of my situation? Only a voice that talks to you with wisdom, compassion and curiosity can really help life become what you want it to be. So tune into your inner voice and be aware of how it is driving your behavior, your happiness and ultimately, your impact.

“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.”

—Albert Einstein

Tool

Increasing Awareness of Your Inner Voice

Think of an event or something that happened in the past week or two that did not have the outcome you had hoped, or a time when you found yourself feeling anxious, worried or frustrated.

Directions

Write down what was going through your mind at that time.

- What were you saying to yourself?

- What voice was talking?

- What was the tone of that voice?

Write the conversation or your thinking at the time below.

What are the CONSEQUENCES of These Behaviors?

What are the consequences when you work too hard to prove your value and end up overrowing the boat? Or when your inner voice is criticizing or judging instead of providing wisdom and encouragement?

Reflect for a moment how this might impact the below:

- Work

- Health

- Happiness

- Personal

- Others

Practice

To Develop an Inner Voice that Serves rather than Sabotages:

Every day practice writing for 2-5 minutes about a situation that didn't go as you had planned because your critic or complainer inner voice drove the show. Now, tap into your best Sage voice of compassion, wisdom, curiosity and coaching. Use the wisdom of this voice to write down how you would like to approach this conversation or change your self-talk next time.

*If we want to change our inner dialogue, we have to practice talking to ourselves in a new way. The fastest way to do this is to write with the new voice daily until it becomes habit. Start with spending just 1 or 2 minutes a day doing this. If you do it consistently for a few weeks you will notice a big difference.

Key Learning Point

Short-Term Rewards vs. Long-Term Consequences

There is usually some reward in the short term I get for this behavior and that is what keeps me doing something, even in the face of consequences to my health, happiness, or impact on others. There is also something called “achievement addiction” that can drive this behavior. And, like any drug that hits our opioid receptors, it is only as good as our last hit. This need for achievement and the good feeling that comes with it can be very addictive, and just as the drug addict ends up hurting the people they care about the most, so can the achievement addict.

Sometimes, it is driven from a place of fear. Fear that I won't get that next promotion, or that someone else will instead of me. Fear that they don't see how good I am, or that I am not doing enough. Even, sometimes, fear I will be fired if I don't take on more. It is helpful to remind ourselves of our long-term vision in these situations.

The opposite of fear is courage. When we step out of fear and into courage we can do things differently; allowing us to make intentional choices that serve our long-term goals and aspirations, not our short-term fears and needs for recognition.



Reflection Question

Reflect on these questions below for a few moments.
What is driving this behavior for you?

- What is the impact of this on...?
 - Being an Inspirational Leader
 - My Brand/Personal Impact



Purpose Impact Statement

Key Learning Point

Identifying and knowing who I want to be in this world and what impact I want to have is an important first step in helping us make decisions differently around what we are doing and why we are doing it. When I have clarity around the legacy I want to leave and the impact I want to have, I start to view situations with new perspectives. It allows me to more clearly take a big-picture view and not give into fear or the need for recognition or achievement. Purpose statements are generally about something outside yourself and the greater whole. Reflect for a moment on the questions below and think about what your Purpose statement might be.

My Purpose Impact Statement

- What is the impact I hope to have on the world and those around me?
- What is the legacy I hope to leave?
- What are the unique strengths or talents that I want to share with others?
- What are my deepest core values? What will I not compromise on?

EXAMPLE Purpose Statements

"To act in a manner that brings out the best in me and those important to me especially when it might be most justifiable to act otherwise."

—Resolution, Mahatma Gandhi

"To serve as a leader, live a balanced life, and apply ethical principles to make a significant difference."

—Denise Morrison, CEO of Campbell Soup Company

"To be a teacher. And to be known for inspiring my students to be more than they thought they could be."

—Oprah Winfrey, founder of OWN, the Oprah Winfrey Network

"To have fun in [my] journey through life and learn from [my] mistakes."

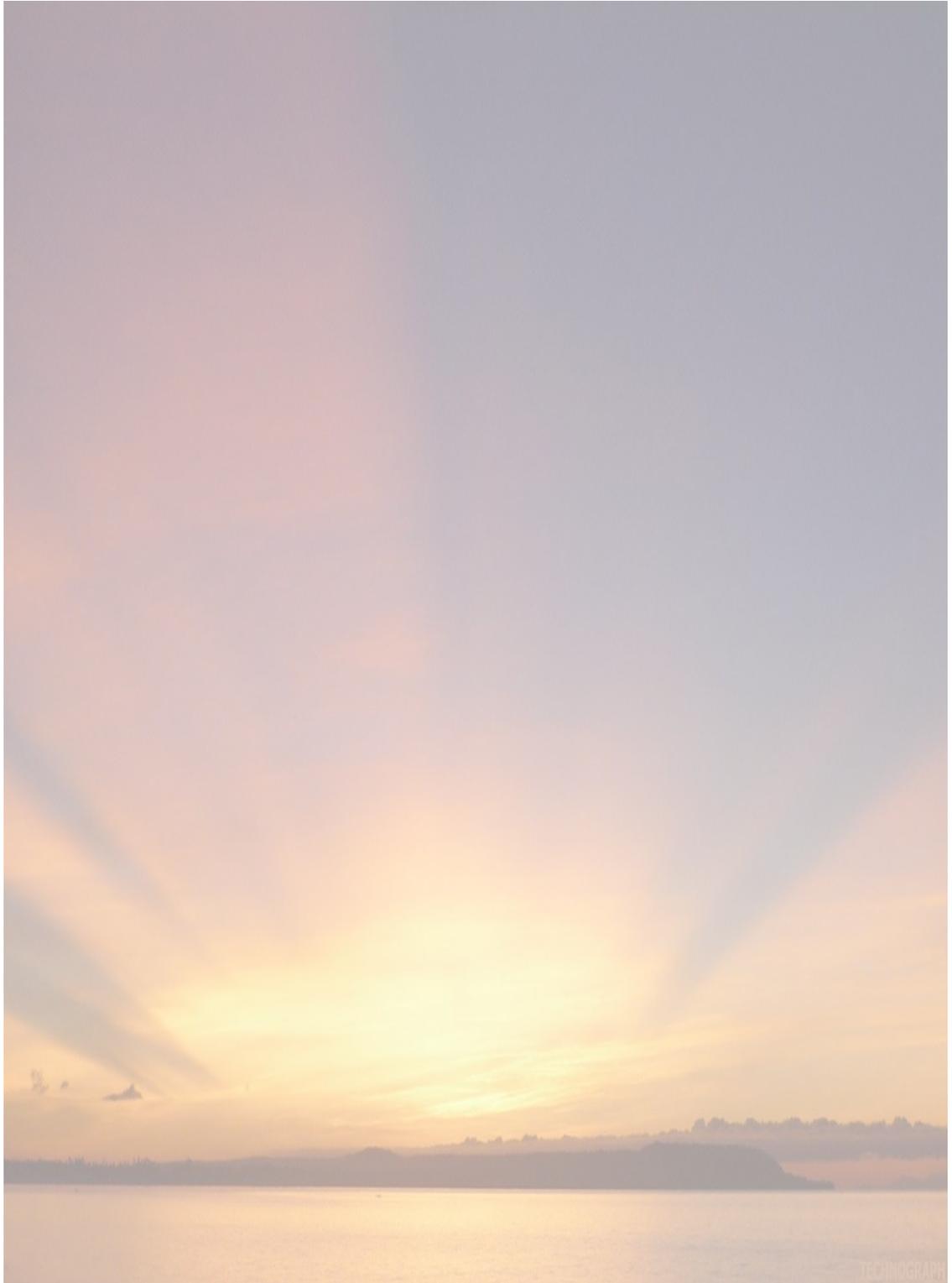
—Sir Richard Branson, founder of The Virgin Group

"To use my gifts of intelligence, charisma, and serial optimism to cultivate the self-worth and net worth of women around the world."

—Amanda Steinberg, founder of DailyWorth.com

My Purpose Impact Statement

Please write your first draft of your purpose statement below. Use the reflection questions and examples above to prompt your thinking.



Key Learning Point

The Power of Purpose

Being clear on our Purpose and knowing what truly matters to us allows us to slow down and reflect on a bigger picture. This informs our decision making differently, and keeps us from saying “yes” to things that do not truly fill us with energy and passion. We no longer waste time and energy on the wrong things for the wrong reasons. This increases our overall energy and resilience.

With big-picture thinking, we have increased ability to see multiple perspectives. We move much more quickly past perceived barriers that in the past might have led us into downward spirals.

Purpose is often about others and becomes an outward-facing focus rather than inward. This is where we really step into inspiring and enabling others to do their best work. We no longer come from a place of fear or insecurity in our own self-worth, but rather care much more deeply about others and our overall impact on them.

With the increased clarity, resilience, energy, confidence and outward focus that comes with getting really clear on your Purpose comes truly Inspiring leadership! I am more collaborative, creative and clear on decisions in this space, and therefore truly a better leader.

Reflection Exercise

What is one thing I will DO differently starting Monday to become a more Inspiring Leader?

Who can I share my Purpose statement with to help me gain clarity and commitment around it?

What was most impactful for me in this session? What do I want to be sure of and remember?

Reflection Reading

Lessons from a Fisherman

An investment banker was at the pier of a small coastal village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The man complimented the fisherman on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Man replied, “Only a little while.” The investment banker then asked why didn’t he stay out longer and catch more fish. The fisherman said he had enough to support his family’s immediate needs. The man then asked, “But what do you do with the rest of your time?”

The fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siestas with my wife Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my friends. I have a full and busy life.”

The man scoffed. "I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat, you could buy several boats, eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to a bigger city like LA and eventually New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise."

The fisherman asked, "But, how long will this all take?"

To which the man replied, "15–20 years."

"But what then?" Asked the fisherman.

The investment banker laughed and said, "That's the best part. When the time is right, you would announce an IPO and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions!"

"Millions—then what?"

The man said, "Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siestas with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your friends."

Additional References on Inspirational Leadership

Entrepreneur Magazine: 7 Characteristics of Inspiring Leaders

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/252916#>

1. They express unerring positivity
2. They feel gratitude for their team
3. They have a crystal-clear vision for the future
4. They listen
5. They communicate impeccably
6. They are trustworthy
7. They are passionate

Harvard Business Review: How to Be an Inspiring Leader

<https://hbr.org/2017/04/how-to-be-an-inspiring-leader>

"Instead, inspiring leaders are those who use their unique combination of strengths to motivate individuals and teams to take on bold missions—and hold them accountable for results. And they unlock higher performance through empowerment, not command and control."

We wish you the very best on your journey toward becoming a more Inspiring leader!

Linkage

EVERY PERSON, IN EVERY ROLE, IN EVERY ORGANIZATION HAS THE CAPACITY TO LEAD, AND TO LEAD WITH LASTING IMPACT.

At Linkage, we're passionate about developing leaders who create lasting impact in and outside of their organizations.

We Believe strong leadership needn't be confined only to large, multinational corporations, executive boardrooms or the C-suite.

Becoming the best requires a lifelong commitment to learning, improving, adapting and developing.