

*“Lorraine’s amazing life is interwoven with insights on how to achieve your dreams while delivering powerful results.”*

- JEREMY MACE, CEO & VISTAGE MEMBER



*eat  
while you  
dream*

BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
AND HOST OF THE SERIES  
*LEADING THE WISE WAY*

L O R R A I N E  
*wiseman*

Eat While You Dream  
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Lorraine has a remarkable way of making complex concepts not complex. Her proven strategies and working tools for managing and leading an organization or personal change to new heights are invaluable. ~Robert A. Bates, President & CEO, Southern Mutual Church Insurance

Lorraine possesses a powerful combination of authenticity, wide ranging business skills, and the ability to coach with empathy. She advised me and members of my team through a time of tremendous professional and personal changes, where we all achieved our goals. ~Michael Branning, Former CEO and Owner, Avtec Inc.

Lorraine Wiseman is a superstar business coach who combines business knowledge with heart and energy. Having her as a coach has dramatically improved my business performance, not only in the bottom line but also at the life-enhancing cultural level. She has made me a better leader and a better person. She knows what she is talking about! ~Woody Belangia, CEO, ATC Development

My mother has an amazing talent to not only coach CEOs to help build their organizations but also to coach me through all of life's obstacles. She taught me to be resilient and to always look for new opportunities to thrive. I believe this book will not only allow you the insight into the corporate world she thrives in but also a glance into our home lives and navigating the seemingly impossible balance of work and family. ~Neeshali Adhya

Lorraine is a force of nature. She cannot be stopped. Working with her is as powerful as having mother nature at your control. She is your secret weapon. With her guidance you will be unstoppable. ~Dianne Rushing, CEO AOS Specialty Contractors.

If you are someone who has wondered how to grow your business beyond your dreams, this is a must read. Lorraine has a way of weaving proven process into your biz wish list, until suddenly — “the unattainable” is sitting right there on your balance sheet. ~Lorie Gardner, CEO/Founding Partner, Mad Monkey, Inc.

Honestly speaking, working together at Newman Hattersley was such a privilege and I hold that experience very close to my heart. You are an

inspiring and highly motivating leader, with absolute purpose and a passion and drive to success like no one I've ever encountered outside of competitive sports. You've taught me numerous lessons in leadership and I have carried that knowledge with me in everything I do. You always taught me to put your customer first and focus on their pain points so that their business can be successful. You also gave your employees the necessary empowerment so we could trip up, learn, get additional coaching and bounce back even stronger. But most of all, you always rocked a confident smile, even during difficult situations, your composure and great sense of humor shone throughout! ~Michael Krause

I have had the pleasure of working with Lorraine for a few years now and felt the impact of her character almost immediately. Lorraine is a powerful individual who pushes herself and the people who surround her to their greatest limits. Her knowledge and passion for what she does is inspiring. If Lorraine's book is any reflection of who she is as a person and as a professional, be prepared to be amazed. ~Jamil Rahman, CEO NRI and Aucto

"Lorraine and I had many self-discovery conversations while training for a 252 mile bicycle ride for the Alzheimer's Association. I was at a professional crossroad struggling with what the next chapter in my life would be. Through her unique style Lorraine set me on a path to discover my gifts and talents and how I can make valuable contributions doing what I love. Lorraine not only brings a business mindset but also understanding the psychology associated with changing human behavior which creates a dynamic coach. Soak in the knowledge, pay attention and trust the process." ~Janette Robinson

"It's a huge challenge to sum up how Lorraine energizes and impacts others in a few words. She is a role model for inspirational servant leadership and "how can we?" thinking! She encourages next steps in faith, life and work; because she cares about the right things over the long term. She cares about leaving the right legacy." ~He will recognize himself in the book.

# Contents



<b>Acknowledgment</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Is Culture Created or Experienced?</b>	<b>15</b>
Culture in the Workplace	16
Culture Styles	18
Global Culture Versus Country Culture	20
Feminine Versus Masculine	21
Religious Versus Spiritual	22
Leadership Styles	26
Power Distance	26
Negotiating Style	27
Work Pace	28
Conversation Style	29
Change Styles	30
The Change Process	30
The Change Style Indicator	31
Key Takeaways	33
<b>Chapter 2: Gender Roles ... Who Cares?</b>	<b>35</b>
I Am a Leader	36
Don't Go Rent-Free	38
Women Against Women	44
People Against Women	45
Women Against Self	46
The Mirror Effect	48
Be You but Be Professionally You	50
Express Your Needs	53

Mandated Diversity	54
Key Takeaways	55
<b>Chapter 3: Money Makes the World Go Around</b>	<b>57</b>
Financial Intelligence ... A Lost Art	58
Read Your Numbers	58
The Power Of 1%	60
Purge, Don't Splurge	64
Sustainable Gains	66
Key Takeaways	68
<b>Chapter 4: The Turnaround</b>	<b>69</b>
Rally the Troops	70
Put the Right People in the Right Places	71
Reset the Group	74
Cut Out the Waste	76
Grow Your People	77
Listen to Your Customers	79
Put the Customers in the Room	82
Align Core Values	84
Tick the Box	85
Key Takeaways	89
<b>Chapter 5: The Myth of Work-Life Balance</b>	<b>91</b>
Key Takeaways	100
<b>Chapter 6: Artificial Balance</b>	<b>101</b>
Delegate	102
Create Leaders	104
Model the Right Behavior	106
Build Your Emotional Bank	107
Find Something Else to Love	108
Key Takeaways	109
<b>Chapter 7: The Most Important</b>	<b>111</b>
Key Takeaways	115
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>117</b>

# Acknowledgment



Before I go any further, I want to say that I have many dedications to write. This is my first time in print so I ask for your patience.

I dedicate this, my first of many, to my family—my husband, Roger, who will grow to know through the stories, my son, Arun Adhya and my daughter, Neeshali Adhya, who are the subject of several stories of how I paid forward what I learned and where the expression, Wisemanized, was born. To my sister, Angela Brown (Mercer), who has witnessed how I worked through and survived countless challenges and heard my stories and painfully listened. To Shawna, my niece, who is just getting to know me, and I pray she keeps coming back. To my parents, Maude and Joe Brown, who raised me to trust my instincts and be tenacious and taught me to be resilient. As I was growing up, Dad would get a copy of my text books to follow along and learn with me, and Mom would ask me when I finished, “*What are you now?*”

*“Call me what you want just don’t call me late for supper,”* kept me humble.

To Oma, my grandmother, the mother of my biological father, who you may learn more about ... thank you for your strength and your push and your growth mindset. Your words, “*Lorraine be whoever and whatever you want to be, you are limited only by the barriers you create,*” gave me to confidence to go after what I want.

To Brian Ellis, the greatest mentor I have had in my life, you opened a lot of doors for me. I walked through and always wanted to make you proud. Thank you for the experience of a lifetime.





# Introduction



In 2003, I was appointed as Director and General Manager of an international corporation with headquarters in the United Kingdom. I flew over to the UK from Canada to attend my first board meeting.

Surrounded by the board, directors and presidents of different legal entities under the corporate umbrella, I was not nervous. I was excited to bring my perspective, wisdom and experience as a turnaround expert.

I envisioned a room full of executives taking copious notes and finishing with vigorous head nods or even enthusiastic applause.

When it was my turn to speak, I confidently got up and said, “*We have to do just two things...*” I was holding my hand up with my index and middle fingers held in a V shape to symbolize the number two.

Before I was able to bring my hand down, the Chair interrupted and called out my name with a slightly tensed expression. Everyone else in the room pressed their lips tight and stared at me like a criminal in a lineup. I folded my fingers and rested my hand at my side.

“*Oh my gosh, did I say something wrong?*” I asked, a little worried.

“*No, you didn't,*” the Chair assured me. “*But I've got to tell you, your hand gesture is unacceptable here.*”

“How does that...? It’s just number two,” I stuttered in disbelief. I was called out for gesturing the number two with my two fingers. From where I came, I don’t remember any social etiquette that disallowed me to do it.

The Chair explained to me, “Lorraine, it’s like giving the finger.”

My eyes widened. *The finger?!*

As you’ll discover inside these pages, understanding culture, human dynamics, logistics and how to Eat While You Dream is both elegant and simple, but may require a fresh perspective and a dash of fun. I’ll explain what happened with my “finger faux pas” in a moment. First, a bit of that perspective.



*Eat while you dream* was born at the request of others. Every event at which I have been blessed to speak has ended with, “Do you have a book?” This was often followed by a string of questions such as, “How do you do it? How are you able to transform businesses and put them forward? How are you able to figure out what to do?”

My answer has always been this: “You’ve got to eat while you dream. That’s the recipe.”

My name is Lorraine Wiseman, President and CEO of Leading the Wise Way, a company I started in 2012 to support the learning and development of organizations and their executives in the areas of strategy, change management and leadership. I also Chair a CEO Advisory board of Vistage Worldwide, and Chair and Coach CEOs and Executive Leaders.

I have taken on several roles in my entire career. I’m an accountant, business strategist, entrepreneur, executive coach and former teacher. As a business strategist, I transformed international companies from failing entities into thriving and sustainable companies. I built processes, workflows and systems for companies in order to operate with less cost, shorter lead times

and higher efficiency. This was a painstaking process because it involved not only changing and implementing new ways of working but also having people to get on the bus with you—which was the biggest stumbling block.

To eat while you dream is to break down your goal into pieces and then execute a relevant action each day to get closer to that goal. My job was to make all future jobs easier.

The objective was to build a system that can stand on its own without the need for me to oversee or manage it once the new system has been implemented. Some of the companies that have undergone a change up under my leadership include FCx International, a distributor of specialty valves and flow control equipment, Spirax Sarco USA, the steam manufacturing giant, and IMI Nuclear, a leader in nuclear power manufacturing and distribution.

In each chapter, I am sharing stories and lessons on how I built a career running these businesses. It started as a temporary role. Prior to this, I was a CFO in a school for a whole decade. My transition was a sharp pivot from finance into an entirely different battlefield with its own sets of hurdles and challenges.

I grab opportunities even though they don't always come nicely wrapped. While others see problems in chaos, I see opportunities. I see a shiny, high-value gift with so much potential disguised in a tattered, ugly gift wrap.

My tremendous drive was highly influenced by my paternal grandmother. As a child, she used to say, "*Lorraine, do whatever you want, be whatever you want. There are no limits. The only limits you have are the ones you create.*"

When I started turning businesses around, I had never known anyone personally who had done the same. There was no one I could approach to receive coaching and mentoring in order to perform the job. But I have the *innate* ability to come up with solutions where there seemed to be none and the willpower to do it. I can step back, look into the big picture, identify the pains, whether in the process, people or money, and figure out how to fix those pains. Ultimately, the added value brought by improved processes and systems will and should translate into additional profits for the companies.

For a lot of people, the phrase “eat while you dream” still sounds a little bit vague. Normally, it’s followed by more questions such as: *What exactly does it mean? How does it make sense in view of turning businesses around? **How do you eat while you dream?***

Imagine yourself driving your car in the middle of the night towards a destination a few miles away. You know where you’re going but while sitting in your car, you can only see as far as your headlights. This is true for anyone driving whether it’s night time or day time. You can only see as far as your eyes can see. But you take the journey knowing that as you keep moving forward, you are getting closer to your destination.

That is how you eat while you dream. You’ve got to produce today while you dream and fund for the future. You must also protect the core that generates today’s profits in order to fund the dream and remain sustainable. To achieve the dream, you set a goal that can be achieved for the long term and divide them into smaller tasks that can be accomplished in the short term. You work your way through by doing what you need to do today to get closer to your goal—despite setbacks.

As an old adage says, *Rome was not built in a day.*

The way I transformed businesses was by setting the goal (long term) and figuring out the “hows” (short term). I divide the hows into smaller components that can be executed one day at a time until the goal is achieved. It’s putting one brick at a time to build the walls until the whole house is built. It’s building the core foundation which enables the company to deliver results in the short term while funding the cost of buying the bricks that will take care of the long term. Like Rome, turning a business around takes more than a day—it can take 3-6 months or even a year!

While it sounds easy, it’s not at all simple. *Eat While You Dream* sheds light on the reality of what it takes to transform companies. It’s not enough that you have a working knowledge on running a business or have served in a leadership role for a long time. I have faced complex and unique situations but my skills and experiences, albeit important and helpful, have done only half the job. The other crucial requirement was dealing with those things that were not visible on the surface. It has less to do with what I know

but more about how to navigate and address the different responses from different people as they come in front of me.

Inside these pages, you will discover how I was able to overcome these seemingly *invisible* issues I encountered while transforming different companies.

Chapter 1 is about culture. Cultural elements play a huge role in the way people accept and adjust to what is new. Different people respond differently to new systems, new leaders or new organizational structures. As an expat who has been assigned all over the globe, I learned the value of going deep into the cultural identity of the organization I was working with in order to get results.

Chapter 2 deals with gender roles. It has long been an issue in the workplace and has continued being so. I have been in a situation where this has stopped me from doing my job, but it has also highlighted how being a woman was also an advantage.

Chapter 3 talks about the lost art of financial intelligence. Here, you will learn that in terms of financial management, it's best to stick to the basics.

Chapter 4 highlights how to get a buy-in from people who have a closed mindset in order not to miss an opportunity. That's when a turnaround happens, when you're able to get people on board with you.

In Chapters 5 and 6, you will be surprised that work-life balance is in itself a myth, but there's way to achieve the balance that you're looking for.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I delved into the one area of my life where I started questioning if it's really all about balance or there's something deeper. This revealed what *truly* drove my life's choices.

One of the most valuable lessons I've learned from my experience is: To attain the best results in anything that we do, we must be present and realize that, while it's important to think of the long term, we must devote most of our energies into the now. This is the whole essence of *Eat While You Dream*.

The whole experience has been mentally, emotionally and physically exhausting, but also rewarding. To have produced results that were not there before was an achievement that motivated me to do an even better job each time.

I followed my instincts and carefully crafted strategies involving processes and people. As I have earlier said, I see opportunities in chaos where others only see problems.

I will also recount several stories of how I have overcome the challenges of balancing work and my roles as a mother, wife, daughter and friend.

*Eat While You Dream* is a recipe for success built on patience, faith, hard work, emotional strength and mental agility. I am revealing everything I've learned in the past years: the lessons, the pains, the strategies, even some very personal self-discoveries that drove the choices I made.

My experiences equipped me with the skills, knowledge, network and wisdom to run my company and be able to coach other CEOs and Executive Leaders as a way of paying it forward. In transforming businesses and helping others I have been transformed myself, and I want the same for you.

## CHAPTER 1

# Is Culture Created or Experienced?



Remember that trip to the UK I mentioned? It was 2003 and I had been appointed as Director and General Manager of Newman Hattersley with headquarters in the United Kingdom.

*“We have to do just two things,”* I said while holding my hand up with my index and middle fingers held in a V shape to symbolize the number two.

The Chair interrupted.

The board members in the room had already locked their gaze on me with a combination of admonishment and disbelief.

*“Did I say something wrong?”* I asked.

*“Your hand gesture is unacceptable here,”* he replied.

The Chair explained, *“Lorraine, it’s like giving the finger.”*

My eyes widened. *The finger?!*

I have been giving them what I didn’t realize was the equivalent of the middle finger everywhere else in the world, when my only intention was to make a point.

How does that equal the middle finger?

Understanding the culture of a country, a company and even a handful of people in a boardroom is vital in business. In this case, the two finger “V” had quite a different meaning.

Its origin dates back to the Hundred Years War from 1337 to 1453. It was said that the French despised the English archers who used the Longbow during battles which caused many casualties amongst the French people. The English archers who were captured by the French chopped off their middle and index fingers to invalidate them from using the Longbow. The V sign was used by those who were not captured, displaying defiance against their French enemies to mean, “*You have not cut off my fingers!*”

I would not have known that if the Chair didn’t have the decency to tell me. If I had done it in front of our customers and stakeholders, I would be running the risk of making a bad first impression and lose business—which could be as bad as getting my two fingers chopped off.

## CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE

It’s impossible to lead effectively without learning the culture in the workplace especially if your work requires you to move from location to location. In my case, I have been assigned in many parts of the world. Based on the story you’ve just read, I had to learn it the embarrassing way which is why I always do my homework prior.

The first *two* things that we need to understand about culture is whether it was created or experienced.

The earlier story is one example of an experienced culture. There’s no way I could’ve influenced it with my own culture because it’s an intrinsic part of their history that was passed on to them from generation to generation. You have to respect and go with it.

An experienced culture is one that has very little to zero potential for change. It’s prevalent even outside the workplace because it’s been embedded in an individual without influence from the workplace. It’s a widespread culture of the location or the country. Another way to call it is the “local culture.”



Let's suppose I entered a gelato shop in the UK. If the vendor asked how many scoops I wanted, I would appear rude if I held my hand up with my index and middle fingers in a V shape. He would probably understand if he realized I'm a foreigner and then he might just secretly turn his back with a frown. But not everybody would let it go. And it would be worse if I gave the V shape to a customer of FCx International in the UK.

Other times, it may not be the gesture itself that would trigger annoyance but the indifference, the awful fact that you didn't even do your homework of knowing what offends their culture.

After that unfortunate experience during a board meeting, I never showed up without doing my part. Doing your homework isn't only applicable to experienced culture but also to created culture. In fact, it is a requirement each time you are to deal with people coming from a different culture, no matter the type.

What is created culture in the workplace?

Unlike experienced culture, created culture has a high potential for change, but it's not easy. Intrinsicly, they're still rooted from a deep-seated culture of their regional origin. Nevertheless, the potential for change still exists and this is where you have leverage.

How so?

The culture in a workplace is shaped by people from different backgrounds, even though they could all be coming from the same country. It's unique to that workplace and will continually evolve (albeit minimally sometimes) depending on the movements of people in all levels.

Whatever culture they created can be changed by introducing them to new ways of working and a different set of perspectives, building on and respecting the culture embedded in them individually when they came in.

It's important for me to deeply understand culture and all its nuances, because it largely affects my effectiveness as a business leader and executive

coach. During my years turning businesses around, I designed a formula to reach the sweet spot. The formula has three elements: Culture Styles, Leadership Styles and Change Styles. The last one is the most difficult to manage. But I have a three-step process to effect change, which will be revealed in Chapter 4. You will also discover that culture drives or influences all of these elements. But I created a distinction amongst the three in order to examine them well and reach for the sweet spot.

The sweet spot is the point where you're able to get past the cultural barriers and set things in motion to achieve results. It's where all three overlap as in the following diagram.



## CULTURE STYLES

In Canada, there are thousands different cultures, but they don't stick together. You are your original culture first. If your ethnicity is French, you are French-Canadian. And then there's Indo-Canadian, Irish-Canadian, Spanish-Canadian or Chinese-Canadian and so on.

America is a total contrast. Your culture becomes subservient to American culture. No one really tells you to follow the American ways, but you'll know that you should when you go to the States. There seems to be an

unspoken agreement that no matter what side of the world you came from, you have to do it the American way. It's probably due to America's lack of distinct culture. Not that the country doesn't have any, but it's a melting pot of several other cultures that becomes a fusion of everything—but Americanized.

Just look at the prevalence of yoga in the US and other Western countries. A typical yogi wears tights made of spandex and a sports bra. It's become a form of fitness but selling on the premise that practicing it also enhances one's spirituality. If you go to India and other parts of Southeast Asia where there's a huge population practicing Hinduism, yoga is a way of life and spirituality is its whole essence and not just a consequence. Hindus do not necessarily wear the usual tight-fitted leggings you see in popular culture. Yoga was not intended as a form of physical exercise or stress-relief; it has a meditative and spiritual nature. Hindus practice it to attain connection with the Divine.

Today, yoga in the West has been highly *westernized*.

What does this tell us?

For centuries, the Western culture has been the dominant culture of the world. When Americans or British go to Asia, they kind of expect Asian people to adapt to their culture. When Americans go to France, they expect the French people to adapt to them. The British are the same. When they go to America, they want Americans to adjust to their ways; while Americans also expect the same from British people when they visit the UK.

These are my observations from being an expat for many years. I am not claiming these to be conclusive neither do I generalize my observations to be true for nationalities I've encountered first hand. But through years of experience, I have distilled valuable lessons that I know will be of use to others like me who have been or are on the same journey.

Let's scrutinize this topic deeper and get down to the dualities or styles surrounding culture that are deeply embedded in a company's ways of working, and how crucial they are to one's success as a business leader.

## GLOBAL CULTURE VERSUS COUNTRY CULTURE

As we all know, Disneyland started in America. When I went to Disney World in Florida, I felt “Disney.” By Disney, I meant an All-American “happiest-place-on-earth” vibe. You feel the culture. Disney is exuding from the time you walk through the front gates to the way the staff greets you. Your favorite Disney movies and characters come to life.

You’d think that as a global company, you would get the same vibe everywhere.

Now, I’ve visited Disneyland in Paris with my kids. It wasn’t wholly “Disney.” It felt like a local amusement park with a Disney theme. There was no smoking area and people were allowed to smoke in line. It did not at all feel like Orlando, but we had the greatest time there, nevertheless.

Despite being an international company, Disney follows the culture of the country first, particularly those outside the United States. For them, it’s country first and then Disney.

Let’s take another example. Look at Apple. You can go to any Apple store anywhere in the world and you will get Apple. Like Disney, it’s an international company. But unlike Disney, Apple has the same culture throughout the world, and everybody will understand the brand extremely well. They will not attempt to localize it. In a truly global company like Apple, the local culture adapts to the corporate culture not the other way around.

Such distinction can be hard to identify and the same is true for IMI Nuclear. The company is a publicly listed international company that operates in various parts of the globe. As such, like Apple, it’s easy to assume that they also follow global culture everywhere else. But IMI Nuclear is more similar to Disney than Apple in the way they adjust to the culture of the country.

In other words, the company is country first, then IMI Nuclear.

For instance, no two facilities look similar except for India and Czech Republic. Both of these countries follow the same construction plan and they built the same Greenfield sites. The reason they did this was not

entirely out of following a global benchmark. They did it because it makes sense for the location.

What does it mean for a business leader?

It emphasizes that one cannot assume that an international company always follows a global culture everywhere. This can be easily missed especially for companies incorporated in the West such as IMI Nuclear. When I went to Brno, the expats that were sent before me weren't successful simply because of this quick assumption.

As I've said earlier, the Western culture (particularly American and British) has been the dominant culture in the world. Expats from these countries have a tendency to expect other cultures to adjust to theirs. As my predecessors proved, one cannot be successful unless this duality has been recognized.

## FEMININE VERSUS MASCULINE

The Venn diagram shown earlier was part of my dissertation towards a doctorate in business administration inspired by the study on culture done by a Dutch social psychologist called Gene Hofstede. One of the cultural elements he has studied is masculinity. It has nothing to do with gender bias. It's about the emotional gender roles. In some countries, men are expected to be big and strong and women to be empathetic and caring.

Have you ever noticed how people greet each other when you go from country to country?

In Japan and many other Asian countries, they bow as a way of greeting, saying thanks or giving respect. There's no physical touching but it sends the message. Suppose a Japanese guy moved to Brazil to run a plant. He will have to get used to the way Brazilians or most Latin Americans greet one another, i.e., by kissing and hugging. There is a lot of physical touching there and it doesn't matter whether you're a man or a woman.

Brazil would be labeled as more feminine because of the emotional closeness expected. Family and people always come before business. People from South

America are used to the warm way they greet each other. While it's a stark contrast to the Japanese's formal way, it sends the message just the same.

For Asians who are from the more masculine countries, the South American way might seem a little too invasive of personal space. They make small movements and gestures and they're probably not as comfortable to physical proximity to other people. In Asia, while family remains important as does caring about one another, it is not as visible, and it appears to be business first. But to Latin Americans, it's part of the country's vibrant personality where salsa, flamenco, lambada and many upbeat dances originated.

In Czech Republic and Germany, unless you're a close friend, no hugging is necessary, but a handshake will do. In France and Spain, it's not uncommon to see two friends, sometimes even colleagues, greet each other by leaning forward and touching cheeks on both sides.

Some nationalities particularly those from Asia may not be comfortable with a lot of touching and could be completely uncomfortable with the Latin American or European ways. It doesn't mean they're not in touch with their feminine side. An Asian in Brazil might have to become comfortable with hugging and kissing. A French in Indonesia will have to take it easy with touching cheeks and learn how to bow his head. It shows respect for the culture and the people.

## RELIGIOUS VERSUS SPIRITUAL

There is no way I will speak about culture without covering the matters on religion and spirituality, even though they're highly sensitive topics. I will not go as far as comparing one religion to another. I'll strictly stick to my point based on my personal experiences and observations and some locations will not be disclosed for confidentiality and sensitivity reasons.

In building business relations, there is an unspoken but glaring rule that determines whether you'll be considered part of a league or not. When I say league, I don't mean religion groups per se, but whether you are to be accepted by an established circle or community in a particular location. Usually, these communities are largely driven by a host of different things

and religion is a huge part of it. It has not adversely affected my efficiency at work, but knowing the religious nuances is one way to maneuver through people relations, which is important to achieve better results.

In a workplace, how does being religious play a role?

Here's a funny story. When I moved to a new city, the controller said, "*Lorraine, you've got some work to do,*" to which I replied, "*That's right, I've got some work to do.*" He had to repeat it and said, "*You've GOT some work to do.*" I realized that he meant another thing when he said, "*You've got to pick your church and your colors.*"

The city is a close-knit community of religious people and it's felt in both the local and workplace setups. I quickly understood the need to choose the church as it's part of the customs when you're a member of the Bible belt which I was. But I was confused when I was asked to choose colors.

As it turned out, he meant the football team.

Because I don't pick anything without knowing what I'm signing up for, I went to a game before making the commitment. Being a lover of the underdogs, I chose the team that resonates in this area.

But this story grew funnier.

In my second week, the Vice President for Human Resources came into my office and said, "*Lorraine, we have to talk.*" That's a statement you wouldn't want to hear from anyone. It suggests something's wrong. What could it be? I was just coming in, I couldn't have done something wrong. It became clear when she said, "*You are in violation of our dress code.*"

I was wearing a blue and white polka dot dress with a white jacket. I was actually thinking of wearing it to church on Sunday. I was confused what's going on and it's natural to be defensive in a situation like this, but I decided to listen and understand the reason behind her remark.

She explained, "*The neckline is too low.*"

“When you say *too low*, what does it mean?” I asked.

I had to understand what their standards for “too low” were as I didn’t want to appear as though I was imposing my own preferences. As much as possible, I wanted to show that I respected their standards for dressing.

“Your dress is *sexually provocative*,” she said.

I can’t help but chuckle at this. I thought that was a little bit amusing because nobody has used those two words with me since I was sixteen. In Canada, I could wear that dress to work without a problem which is why it was easy to assume the same for that country, but I didn’t take it as a laughing matter per se. I made sure they saw me as a leader who respected their customary and preferences. I have never worn that dress at work or in the church again.

I realized that you couldn’t generalize a country in terms of ways of dressing. You are most likely going to be more mindful if you’re in countries with strict dress codes for women such as India, Saudi Arabia or most Middle Eastern countries, but not in other Western countries. However, what applies to where you’re from may not apply to another location, despite similarities in background.

I have to respect their standards for dressing especially because I’m not coming in as a tourist but as a business leader who has a specific task to accomplish in their country. I wanted to show that I was willing to *adapt* to what was acceptable to them in order for them to want to follow me.

I became more mindful of my choices of outfits for work. I thought that you only needed to watch out for dress codes when you’re in a country that largely follows a religion with conservative choices of outfits for women, and that the other major religions, such as ours, are more liberal and tolerant. Apparently, there are small details like this that can draw the difference between what’s proper and what’s too much. Religions, no matter what it is, play an intrinsic role in what is acceptable or not in terms of how people should dress.

Now, what does it mean to be spiritual?



Strictly speaking, to be religious is to be spiritual because, in its very essence, religion must be spiritually nourishing. However, in popular belief, one can be spiritual without associating oneself to a religion; which goes to say that anyone, both a believer of a religion or not, can call himself spiritual if he incorporates in his lifestyle a set of practices that appears to be nourishing his spirit.

How can you tell if a person or a group of people are spiritual? What makes a particular place spiritual?

There are no defined criteria, only signs.

Consider these places: India, Indonesia and Japan.

When you hear of yoga, India and Bali (Indonesia) easily come to mind. This is where yoga originated. As I've mentioned earlier, it's part of their spiritual practice as Hindus and Buddhists. That is their way of living. When yoga became a popular form of fitness particularly in the West, yogis also earned the reputation of being spiritual because it's an intrinsic nature of the asanas (postures).

When you hear the word Zen, Japan and their orderly way of living comes to mind. They're all about Zen, in the way they cook their food, arrange their closets, and build their homes. You probably have Marie Kondo's KonMari method in mind while reading this. Interestingly, she revealed that her method was partly inspired by the Shinto religion. In Shintoism, cleaning and organizing things can be a spiritual practice.

California exudes the same Zen vibe without being similar to Japan or any other Asian country because of mere comparison against New York's *ultra* fast-paced nature. It's a bit more relaxed and you'll find yourself sitting on a chair with a surf board right up behind you. It's a different kind of Zen and you might say it's *plastic* Zen compared to Asia's Zen.

But yoga, KonMari and Zen aside, let me describe how knowing this distinction helped me grow into a person that can easily adapt in whatever environment I was in.

I have been to India many times, having been married to an Indian-Canadian (first marriage) and sent there for work. I have seen how they religiously followed their prayer times throughout the day, practiced yoga with total awareness of the flow of energy, and treat one another with respect and compassion. Coming from a background with such a stark contrast from theirs, I have found it easier to build relations by blending myself into their culture without changing mine. It's enough that they respect me and my own beliefs so I can give the same respect to them.

I am far from calling myself religious even though I follow a religion. It's safe to say I'm more spiritual than religious. I believe that there is a Divine Being that conducts the orchestra we call life, where we are the players of our own instruments; that if we play right, we make the whole performance a sweet reverie.



## LEADERSHIP STYLES

This is one of the three elements in the formula presented earlier in the Venn diagram and also one of the pieces from Gene Hoffstede's study of culture.

Normally, all leaders, no matter where they came from, have common traits. They're strategic and open-minded. They have courage and can make decisions fast. But not all leaders have the same style. And it's even more complex when we look at the leadership styles from country to country.

There are four pointers you need to watch out for: power distance, negotiating style, work pace and conversation style.

## POWER DISTANCE

When you look at the company from a hierarchical perspective, it's up and down. It can be low or flat as in Sweden where the leader is just another person. She can be seen walking around and engaging with everybody in

the organization. I would spend as much time working with an operator as I would drafting management reports with a suite of Vice-Presidents.

It's much easier to work in this kind of organization because the communication lines are almost always open so the message can get through fast and clear.

In Switzerland, the power distance is wide or hierarchical. You are expected to respect the lines of authority. If you want something from a person three levels down, you have to go through three levels of management. Because you can't go directly to the person, it can cause miscommunication.

Imagine the game "pass the message" where there are normally more than five participants per group of contenders. The person in front will receive the message and pass it on to the next person by whispering. That person will then pass the message to next one and so on and so forth until the message reaches the last person in the line, who will reveal the message he or she received. The answer closest to the real message will win.

In this game, the message usually gets distorted once it has reached the last person, which is why the game declares the group with the *closest* answer as the winner. It's almost never accurate.

This is the same problem you might encounter when dealing with an organization with a wide power distance. After you've passed on the message, you can't control how it will eventually reach the intended receiver.

If you are aware of the types of power distance, you will have an advantage at adjusting your own leadership style right from the start to avoid bigger issues with getting people to want to follow you.

## NEGOTIATING STYLE

When you are negotiating with an American, five minutes can be enough to arrive at a deal. 30 minutes is long enough to go through all levels of considerations. One hour might be too long. But five hours? Tell me I can still get home in time for dinner.

In South America, you can never start a negotiation without several hours of conversation first. Your counterpart will need to *know* you first. You must earn their trust before they can let you in.

It usually starts with meeting the family, exchanging gifts or appreciation tokens, taking you out for a three-hour lunch and sharing details about your own family. They want to know how many children you have, what they are doing, what your spouse is doing and the whole history about your career. They want to know what's important to you to see if your values are aligned with theirs. Only when they feel like you're their brother, that's the only time they'll start the conversation and get to some business ... usually after five hours or an entire day getting to know each other. Expect a call the next day if they like you.

## WORK PACE

There are certain levels of work pace depending on where you are in the country. New York is different from The South. In The South, people tend to take their sweet time before finishing a project. New Yorkers are at the extreme side. Everything moves fast—the lifestyle, the work and the way they communicate. They're direct, hardworking, disciplined and rigorous, so they wouldn't be apologetic nor beat around the bush. That doesn't say that people in other parts of the country don't have the same qualities. Only difference is, unlike New York, the pace is much slower in other places.

As a leader, if you want to get things done, you have to know these distinctions. Southern people treat each other like family. They understand that they have deadlines and that they must cater to customer needs. They are respectful and hard-working. But they are not in a big hurry to get things done. If they are to undertake a project, it would take a whole day of planning and agreement to finish the work within three weeks. In New York, that whole discussion can be completed in an hour. Before you know it, they're hitting the machine to get the project done in 1-2 days.

If you are used to a fast-paced environment, you'll get frustrated if you go down south. If you're from a more relaxed work environment, you might beat yourself up to exhaustion when you work in a fast-paced environment

such as New York. You've got to learn how to adjust your sail according to how the wind blows.

In Southern California, you'll find that people are more relaxed. Comparing it to The South and New York, I must say they're somewhere in the middle. Not too fast, not too slow.

While New Yorkers will not be as sensitive about your feelings and while southerners will treat you like family, those from California seem to be chill about everything. They will not get so serious in building deep friendly relations nor be so direct that they don't care about how you feel. It's as if every day is Coachella. It may be hard to get things done when you're surrounded by people in their floral shirts and flip-flops.

## CONVERSATION STYLE

If you want a British person to listen to you, you've got to beat around the bush. They are not as direct in expressing their thoughts as Americans. You cannot say, "*Last Thursday, you promised that you were going to get this shipping report over to me,*" as that would sound accusatory. Say instead, "*Do you remember that conversation we had last Thursday when we were talking about that order? Why don't we go over it when you have a chance?*"

The first statement can make them feel attacked. The second one is a gentle nudge that doesn't put them in a position where they feel they need to defend themselves. You cannot hold somebody accountable directly. You cannot assume that both parties will communicate well just because they both speak English.

I have been asked before, "*How were you so successful in going from Canada to the UK?*" I said, "*I learned how to translate English to English.*"

What does that mean?

Despite speaking the same language, we had two companies that did not know how to communicate with each other.

A guy from England came in my office complaining about a Canadian engineer. He showed me what the Canadian guy had said, *“How dare he say this to me?”* I was looking at the email and said, *“I’m sorry, but I’m not sure I understand this fully. Will you tell me what’s in his message that sounded wrong?”*

*“This is offensive. He’s asking me how I came up with my calculation,”* he complained. He was talking about the thickness of the walls in some nuclear valves. *“How dare he challenge my intellect?”* he went on further.

The Canadian engineer was a young man in his twenties while the English guy was about 50 years or so. The Canadian was only trying to understand the breakdown of the calculation without meaning to challenge the English guy. A simple email caused such miscommunication and unnecessary negative atmosphere between the two. Everything was lost in translation.

I sent the English guy over to Canada for two weeks so they could speak in person and understand where each other was coming from. The British guy, especially being in his 50s, needed to preface the conversation with all sorts of pleasantries around while the Canadian just wanted to get to the point. Within two weeks, they cleared things up between them and understood that there was no intention from either party to disrespect the other.



## CHANGE STYLES

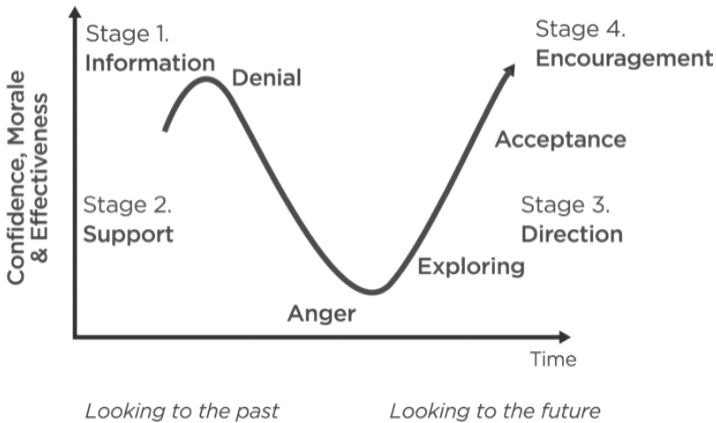
Culture has a lot to do with someone’s reaction to change. Change management is fictitious. You can lead change, but you can’t manage change.

How do you get people to change?

## THE CHANGE PROCESS

The way different people react to change is no different than a grieving process. All of a sudden, you lose something you’ve been familiar and

## The Change Curve



Source: <https://www.educational-business-articles.com/change-curve/>

comfortable with for a long time. A better way to understand this is by looking at the Kubler Ross change curve.

In this diagram, a person goes through a denial phase after receiving the information. It's not the way he used to do it anymore. He will either stick his toe in or resist. He can become passive aggressive or even sabotage the change. This is the anger phase. Once he realizes life has rolled in and there's no way he can resist without being left behind, he will start exploring ideas or paths to discover how he fits in the change. Eventually, he will come out of that phase and move to acceptance.

The curve is different for everybody. Some may take a while being in the denial or angry stages. Some may spend a lot of time exploring before reaching acceptance. Some may go through the curve a little bit faster than others. Your role as a leader is to help people through the transition from one stage through the other.

### THE CHANGE STYLE INDICATOR

Leading change requires a little knowledge of psychology. My work assignments were time-bound so there is not much time to deal with

resistance. I had to know how to communicate the change with each person in a way that they're going to receive it and get on the bus fast because we've got to move. It may not be overnight, but it should not eat up the time I was given to effect the change.

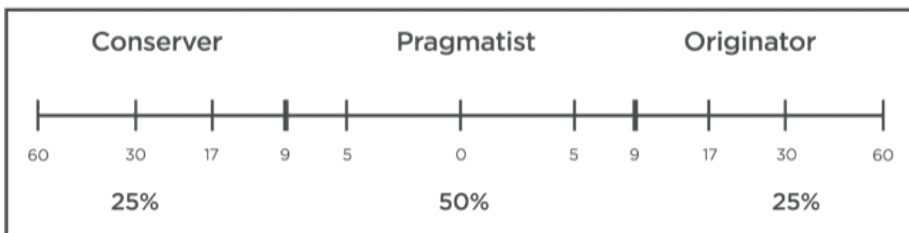
As such, I hired practitioners and got certified at using a great tool called the Change Style Indicator by MHS Assessments.

CHANGE STYLE INDICATOR		
CONSERVERS	PRAGMATISTS	ORIGINATORS
<i>Accept</i> the structure	<i>Explore</i> the structure	<i>Challenge</i> the structure
Prefer change that is incremental	Prefer change that is functional	Prefer change that is expansive

Source: <https://iog.ca/leadership-learning/toolsandcoaching/change-style-indicator-by-mhs-assessments/>

The Change Style Indicator is a leadership assessment tool that provides leaders insights into how a person responds to change. By knowing the position of each individual in the continuum of change style, leaders can improve interpersonal communication to avoid conflicts and enable group creativity and collaboration.

### CHANGE PREFERENCES



Source: <https://www.profileassessments.com/change-style-indicator/>

Conservers may not be resistant to change but they need to know where the destination is. For them, you have to begin with the end in mind. They want to know that there's a clear plan to get to the end. The usual



questions they will ask are: WHY are we doing this? WHY is there a change? They don't want change for the sake of change. It has to be justified. There has to be a purpose behind it. That's the only way you can get them on board.

Pragmatists can appear to be wishy washy because they can go both ways. When you see them in the room, they're listening to everybody before they make a decision of where they fit and how they are embraced. While they also want to know the objective of the change, they are more highly concerned about the process and the extent of their participation. Their usual question is: HOW are we going to do that?

Originators are the ones chasing rainbows. They're full of great ideas but they never finish anything because they're onto to the next great idea. They're after a radical change that will challenge the status quo.

How do I get a buy-in using this approach?

**I feed the Conservers my VISION for the change, provide lots of explanations to the Pragmatists around HOW we are going to do it, and I tell the Originators that it will result in a RADICAL CHANGE in the status quo.**

In Chapter 4, The Turnaround, I share stories of how I used this approach to get results. You will see that sometimes, I don't even have to get them to sit down and do the assessment. I can easily tell just by the type of questions they ask.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Do your homework.** Study the culture of the country where you're moving.
- **Know the difference between created and experienced culture.** Created culture has more potential for change because it's shaped by the workplace itself while experienced culture takes more effort to

change because it's embedded before there was any influence from the workplace.

- **Reach the sweet spot.** Understand the intricacies of the three-style formula in the Venn diagram in order to lead effectively. These are Culture Style, Leadership Style and Change Style.
- **Identify how individuals respond to change.** Learn how to apply the change process and the Change Style Indicator in order to get people to get on the bus with you.
- **What's the primary message of this chapter?** Cultural differences tell us that there is not one truth. What may be acceptable for one could not be tolerated by another. The one important rule is respect—respect each other's differences and find a way to reach your common truth as the situation calls for.

## CHAPTER 2

# Gender Roles ... Who Cares?



*“Lorraine is taking over. We’ve promoted her to President and General Manager,”* Bob Bowser announced. He was the COO of the group owning Newman Hattersley in Canada prior to the sale.

As I was nodding my head and shaking hands, I was feeling a little bit nervous but also elated and grateful for the support and opportunity I had been given. I couldn’t wait to get started and deliver as expected.

I take pride in being a *leader* because I’ve worked hard to get to a point where my collective experiences have become so useful in making successful business turnarounds. And here was another opportunity.

My private musings came to a halt when Bob said, *“Imagine how crazy it must be to have a woman President and General Manager of this company.”*

Did I hear it right? A *woman* President? What could he possibly mean by that?

Let’s go back to the beginning...

Following my departure from the private school and the end of my first marriage, I took on a temporary role as Director of Finance, HR and IT for Newman Hattersley in Canada. After eight weeks as a temp, they fired the President of that company and offered me the permanent role as President saying, *“We want to give you this job.”*

I truly admired my mentor, Bob Bowser, and was grateful to him for giving me my first big opportunity. But it had me thinking, is it really unusual to see a woman taking over? I have not made the distinction because I believe that a leader is a leader based on merits and not on gender.

Let's explore this aspect of being a leader and how, as a woman, can we rise through some of the roadblocks up ahead without calling on gender bias.

I AM A LEADER

I will say it again. I AM A LEADER.

There have been women in academia for a long time but in the business world, female executives are rare and few, and always an unusual occurrence.

Despite news of women taking the CEO roles in various industries and global entities, it always comes off as a *special* thing to celebrate. By special, I meant making a big deal of the woman and not the leader. When it's a man, the big deal is the promotion—his merits, his skills, his leadership qualities. When it's a woman, it's the woman.

Why can't we be *just* leaders regardless of gender?

I was once asked, "*Lorraine, what does it feel to be a woman in leadership?*"

I replied, "*I never looked at myself as different from any guy that I worked next to. I always compete with myself.*"

After assuming various leadership roles for many years, it's a question I never thought someone would throw my way. I didn't know I was a 'female in leadership' until that person pointed it out.

During a dinner to honor one of the board of directors who's served the company for 25 years, I turned out to be the only female in the room. The CEO stood and opened his speech with, "*Well, guys...*" He stopped midsentence, scanned the room and landed his gaze on me and said, "*Heck, you're one of the guys!*"

He's a British man and always proper with his use of speech. I use the generic 'guys' when addressing people casually but for him, guys meant men. That meant a lot to me. I said, "*Thank you for not making me feel different. I am the same. I'm honored to be one of the guys.*"

As a leader, my goal is to be recognized for the value I bring to the company and not to prove anything as a woman. My greatest competition was with myself and not with the guy next to me.

In every company I walked into, once I started delivering results, all of that stereotype about being a woman went away. My reputation became strong in delivering results that it wasn't about me being a woman as much as it was about me being an engineer. Funnily enough, I wasn't even an engineer, but I can, and aim to deliver results just as well.

Don't women get extra credit for being a leader on top of being a mother or a wife?

A woman's ability to handle many different responsibilities at the same time is admirable and I'm happy to be one of those they call *a woman in leadership*, even though I don't personally make the distinction. But if there is one piece of advice I'd like to give women when it comes to leadership, it's for women to forget that they're women. It's forgetting that we deserve more applause and consideration because we are women.

I believe I have valid reasons.

We don't want women to have a victim mindset where they think life is being unfair to their gender group. There are simply things we cannot control or change right away but they can always be changed if it's for the best.

In the past, corporations are highly led by men, but this is changing. It's not because circumstances have changed. It's because women simply put the hard work needed to show that they deserved a seat. They're the examples we must look up to.

Instead of saying, "*Look at me, I'm a woman and I managed to accomplish many things.*" Say this instead, "*I am a LEADER and I'm going to accomplish*

*many things with my skills and abilities, and my core values are the anchor that directs my path.”*

Being a leader in business is tough. You are bound to face adversities no matter your gender and you've got to face it head on with whatever you have. As a woman, our advantage is our natural motherly instinct which makes it easier for people to get drawn to us. But it can also work against us when people see it as a weakness, which shows that it's up to us how we must put ourselves out there in whatever we do. There's just a little extra challenge in business because you are up against a stereotype that will not go away completely until we all see ourselves as just leaders without gender distinction.

Men also have their fair share of challenges, whatever those may be, and we cannot also discount them. We cannot blame them for not having the need to carry a baby because that's something we cannot change. But we can work on ourselves as women to have the same or greater level of competencies as them simply because we can, not because we want to outdo men. We must compete with ourselves, not with others, not with the opposite gender.

But has gender bias never affected me at all?

Truth is, it did. But something good came out of it.

## DON'T GO RENT-FREE

My mom used to say, *“Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words can't hurt you.”* You must have heard this a million times and my mother can't take credit for it. But hearing it while growing up helped me develop a thicker skin and have a more pragmatic take when people try to insult me or play it rough with me.

After I have been announced as the President of a company, this mantra proved even more useful. When I heard, *“Imagine how crazy it must be to have a woman President and General Manager in this company,”* I just smiled and turned around but, in my head, I was thinking, *“I've got to show what a woman can do.”*

It wasn't that I wanted to prove what a woman can do, but I wanted to break the stereotype that puts women in a box. Why didn't I say anything? My staff hoped that I would. "*It was embarrassing,*" they said. "*Not for me. He didn't mean to offend me, and I wasn't offended,*" I said.

Why didn't I take offense?

What can't stay can't hurt you. I always say, "*Don't let it rent a space in your head.*"

That is the same thing I tell other women when they face a situation where somebody was trying to undermine their capabilities merely for being a woman. Whether or not it came from a man, my suggestion would always be to let it slide. Use it as a motivation to show that you are qualified and every bit a professional. *Deliver results and all that stereotype about being a woman will go away.*

Earlier, I have hinted about an incident where I felt the impact of gender bias. No matter how nonchalant I was about gender roles and issues surrounding it, I have experienced what I considered a test of my patience and pragmatism as regards to who I allow to rent a space in my head.

I am sure you have all heard the statement, people don't leave companies, they leave their boss. In many cases, the boss chooses the people to leave. Alignment of your individual core values between you and your leader can be critical to your success in a role within the organization. As one of my mentors reminded me along the way, just because your core values are not aligned with someone else's, it does not make yours better than theirs; it just makes them different. I am going to share the most difficult position I faced in my career not with the intention of pointing fingers but as an opportunity to share my reflections and learnings from the experience.

I had been with the organization for three years in a presidential role. The challenge was far from easy to resolve. The organization as a whole needed to think differently, but there were a few people in the wrong seats that

made it more difficult to change the thinking. The most important change needed was how to approach the customers. To do this, we must listen to the customers. Creating an organizational culture that was customer centric would be important to the successful execution of the strategy. As by now you are aware, I lead change through people. I am also an autonomous person and I take my responsibilities seriously.

Coming into this role, I was told this opportunity was not a turnaround. But within one week, I knew it was. They had been shipping products at a loss and following an archaic system still using Lotus as a means of communication. They had limited internal control. Sales people were controlling the prices on which they were incentivized. This highly sales-led practice created limited accountability around profit.

My leader at the time was amazing. A thoughtful, brilliant leader from Argentina who truly understood the reality of what needed to happen. He was the type of leader who listened loudly and from whom I learned a lot. He was highly respected and commanded respect without saying a word. He earned it. He was the strong silent type, generous with his knowledge and understanding of the massive effort it would take to change culture. I was blessed to have him in my life for two and a half years.

Then “it” happened. He confidentially announced his retirement. Senior executives, whether intentional or not, began coddling me in sidebars of leadership meetings.

*“We just want to be sure you are ok...”*

*“We just want to be sure you are happy...”*

*“You know how important you are to be executing the strategy.”*

I kept thinking to myself what on earth is going on? Why all this attention? I definitely didn’t need it or want it.

Underlying the whole charade was a worry that I wanted to replace my boss and someone else got the job. To be honest, knowing how political the role was versus strategic, I really didn’t want it.



If offered, would I have taken it? Yes, provided I did not need to relocate.

I had fallen in love with my community, the people and my location. I broke my own rule of *Don't get close*. I did not want to build deep relationships to the people and the community where I was assigned because I was constantly moving. But I am not sure anyone else knew that. Perhaps they did because what followed became my worst nightmare.

A former peer and colleague, whom I tried to hire because of his talent in sales, became my boss. At first, I was excited because he was exactly the talent I was looking for and I love having talented people around me. He, who shall remain nameless because I would not want to propagate or present him as a great hire to others, became a *talented terror* in the first 24 hours.

Our group CEO introduced him, told him that I was quite capable of having the promotion; but being in the location I was, I continued to be of greater responsibility and importance to the group and the company as a whole.

My thoughts were, "*Shoot me now!*"

His words set me up for a disaster from day one. Now, my boss looked at me only as competition and not someone he wanted to support in succeeding. And so it began.

In our first five minutes alone, his opening line goes, "*Lorraine, just remember one thing and we will be fine, you are here to make **me** look good.*"

There was no way my response was not visible on my face. My first thought was, there wasn't enough space in the room for me and his ego. He sucked the air out of the room with one breath. Shouldn't I just let it slide like I suggested earlier when faced with a similar situation?

There's a difference between a war and a battle.

That person was deliberately making it difficult for me for egotistical reasons. The war was the goal I have for the company, but if I needed to win each battle with him day in day out, it's not worth the time and effort.

In my life, I try hard to restrict my interaction with APEs, the Arrogant, Prideful and Egotistical. This man was King Kong in that world. Make no mistake, I am also confident and strong enough to do what I perceive to be the right thing.

*As a response I said, "I'm sorry, perhaps there is a misunderstanding. I am here to build shareholder value each and every day. I am here to execute the strategy of the group and maximize our opportunity to grow in this market without margin dilution. And most importantly, I am here to ensure that the 300 families who depend on my decisions and this company's success have a sustainable future and a retirement they can count on."*

Needless to say, my comment went unacknowledged and probably unheard, because APEs have amazing capability to only hear what they want to hear. The rest is put on mute. He proceeded that day to use the same words with my leadership team, the management, and, the most embarrassing, in a social event in the privacy of my own home in front of my family.

Some have asked, did this guy have an issue with women in positions of authority?

To answer you frankly, I don't know and really didn't care. For me it was important to deliver results.

Unfortunately, he chose the route of micromanagement. He stepped in, around and on me through his entire tenure. He managed me *upwards* very well saying the right things in the politically-correct situations, and then undermined every effort made to the point of sabotage through others.

When does blind ambition override success? When there are more dead bodies in your wake than leaders being promoted?

We parted company by his choice. His decision put me in a financial position to start my own company and to do what I always wanted to do; help others to help themselves and help others to grow and achieve their goals.

Do I have regrets?

Only pain for the people I left behind. They were *not* the lucky ones. I worked hard as people expressed their desire to move on by providing leads and recommendations. I think my job was done there. The A team are in great places with companies and leaders who care more about their people than their own ambition. I am so thankful for one of the greatest learning experiences and opportunities in my life.

I know my worth not just as a woman but as a leader. I have self-respect, I bring value, and I've held on to my integrity. Wherever I go, I can face the world with my head high. It may have put my patience to the test but not my principles. In fact, it was my principles that allowed me to take the right course of action.

Much as it looked like he did it on purpose to turn me away, I didn't take it personally. He only wanted what he wanted, and I happened to be in his way. That doesn't say I've become immune to adversities. If anything, the adversities I've faced only showed me that there's always a silver lining coming through. I always told myself things didn't just happen to bog me down but instead to push me forward and upwards.

Earlier in my career, I had a similar incident where I was the one who left and you will see that integrity was, and will always be, the shield that keeps me standing.

Women's paths to success can be crooked and rough, and people can throw roadblocks their way. Accept the reality that it's a jungle out there. That everybody's just trying to get on with their lives.

A man can go against a woman, a woman can go against another woman, some people can go against a woman, and a woman can go against herself. If you accept this reality, soon enough you will realize that no one is deliberately out there to take you down, that's just how life is. You just have to do what you have to do to get on with your life.

But it will help to know what you are up against.



## WOMEN AGAINST WOMEN

I've often emphasized in this chapter to let your work speak for you. It doesn't matter whether you're a man or a woman. It's not a competition between genders, it's a competition between ourselves. Once you start delivering results, people don't care about genders anymore.

Do men really make it hard for women to accomplish things?

Or ... is it us women?

Can it be true that women are harsher to other women than men?

This may sound surprising, but women are the ones who often feel threatened when other women are doing well. I've seen this a lot in the workplace and it makes me sad.

Some women make it difficult for other women to succeed. They have a tendency to find what's wrong about other women or discount their accomplishments simply because of insecurity, jealousy or plain disgust.

And that's disgusting.

It's been hard enough for women before us to have the rights we now enjoy. We still face many challenges. We **MUST** help each other. Instead of putting each other down, be that woman who celebrates other women's success.

If you are the woman who is facing scrutiny from other women, focus on your own competition with yourself in order to produce results. Those bigger than you will not gossip about you. Only those below you.

And remember these words from Madeleine Albright, "*There is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women.*"

## PEOPLE AGAINST WOMEN

When the situation is not ideal, I find a way. But it can be hard for other people who have been set in their ways to see that, and understandably so. You'll see why.

I have been asked a lot of times, *“How can you be away from your children for so long?”*

Because I was always away, there was an impression that I was not performing my role as a mother to my children. I have been traveling around the world all the time because of work and I have received a lot of scrutiny from people around me. Even if they didn't mean to and even if they truly care a lot, I felt as though I needed to apologize for having a career while building a family. I can totally understand that. We have a different setup at home. I was the one working and my husband was staying at home looking after our children. This setup was highly frowned upon.

My husband, Roger, gave up his career in 2002 to look after our children. Before we arrived at this decision, our whole family sat around a table and discussed our options. Roger decided to stay at home and take care of the kids. It has to be one of us. He let me take on my new role in England and he has been amazing at running our household.

*“He needs to get a job; he needs to help you,”* some people would say.

I had to make sure the most important people in my life understood why our household didn't look the same as most other families.

*“I understand your concern, but Roger and I are doing well as a team in running our household, even if we're not traditional,”* I explained to them.

We made a decision as a family that he needed to stay at home so I could work and continue helping not only my family, but the families of the company I helped grow. His support made it possible for me to create an impact in and outside our family.

But I was aware that I must put in extra work to perform my duty as a mother. Whenever I was away from my children, I took every opportunity to make them feel my presence even if only virtually. I saw my kids everyday online. I may not be able to touch them, but I was with them. I would spend a good hour with each of them without distractions, no phones, no TV in the background. I would ask them to take their laptops around the room. I did room checks and homework checks, things I would also do when I'm with them physically.

I've got to make it work because it's important that my children not only have a mother by their side, but also an empowered individual they can look up to; someone who can show them that they can chase their dreams unapologetically while also making time for things and people that matter.

Seven years later, the whole role reversal was no longer an issue when they started seeing results of how our family thrived. We taught our children how to be independent and resilient. Roger disciplined the kids and held them accountable to their words.

Both of my children are in their 20s and already have their own homes, following a career they chose for themselves. People stopped asking the same questions they used to throw me. They started seeing the results in my children and would ask this question instead: "*How did you do that? How did you teach them to be self-sufficient and financially literate?*"

My answer was that I would give them pieces of advice but, mostly, *I taught them by example.*

## WOMEN AGAINST SELF

When other people give women a hard time, women do have the control over how they will respond. But we women sometimes find it hard to tell ourselves that we are good enough, competent enough and simply ***enough.***

Women can be harsh on themselves.

When I put a job posting for a nuclear project manager, women went over the list of requirements with me saying, “*I’ve got this... I don’t have that... I might be able to learn this one... I have that... I have that... I don’t have this from the job description...*”

A guy came in and said, “*Hey, would you give me a go at this?*”

The women didn’t tick off three of the skills listed. The guy didn’t have half of them.

What is the problem with us women?

We’re apologizing for what we don’t have and working our butts off to learn all the other requirements before we apply for the job. Whereas a man who didn’t have half of it wouldn’t even point out what he didn’t have. I knew it based on the person’s work experience. A man would just go ahead and apply and learn on the go.

Women would doubt if they deserved the promotion or getting the six-digit salary. They’re uncomfortable at accomplishing more. They feel as though they’re a fraud and people will realize that one day.

I have learned that this is called the *Imposter Syndrome*, a feeling of inadequacy despite evidence of success. Although there have been mixed studies whether it is gender specific or not, several literatures on this topic claim that this phenomenon manifests more in women than men.

Unlike men, women are afraid to take more personal risks because of the fear of failure. Even when they’ve achieved success, they would attribute it to luck or other external reasons and not their abilities.

How do you overcome this?

There are many ways to do it, but one can start by telling oneself that it’s okay to fail. Take some personal risks and learn more as you progress.

Kill the idea that failure will take away your superwoman status. Instead, reward yourself for small and big wins.

And most importantly, be kind to yourself.



## THE MIRROR EFFECT

This one goes for men and women, but I always gave high emphasis on this when coaching young women executives. I always tell them: *“You have to be able to look at yourself in the mirror every morning and you have to feel good about the person looking back at you.”*

In other words, keep your integrity, no matter what. When you are coming from a place of integrity, there is nothing to fear.

This is one way to counter the Imposter Syndrome. When you stick to your integrity, you can face anyone with your head high.

Don't do anything to compromise your integrity. If you're doing something to get somewhere and it's not the right thing, you're not going anywhere. Sooner or later, what you've hid in the dark will haunt you. It will bite you. It will be a career-limiting move.

When I was a CFO at a school, there was a member of the board who asked me to issue a receipt in his name for hundreds and thousands of dollars which was intended as a donation to the company's charitable foundation. It was meant for building school gymnasiums and other facilities, coming from the big investment house where he's also a senior executive.

He assured me that nobody would know.

Did I yield?

Absolutely not.



I said, *“There are a host of reasons why I wouldn’t want to do it. First of all, you would compromise the school’s charitable status. Second of all, I will not compromise my CPA status for you. And lastly, it’s illegal.”*

The year that followed was rough. I had to seek protection. I spoke to the headmaster and revealed the board member’s intention to embezzle the money and the headmaster backed me up 100%. I also sought advice from a lawyer to help me negotiate my exit in case I’ll had to leave, as I could see it coming. They wanted to fire the board member in question, and I didn’t want the headmaster or anybody else to go down because of it.

To prepare for my exit, the lawyer went through all the terms with me on what I would put on the table and I sealed it in an envelope. I went to the headmaster and told him, *“If they put your back against a wall, I’ll leave first. Let’s negotiate while we can. If and when the day comes, I’ll hand you the envelope, you’ll write me a check and we’ll part company.”*

He didn’t let me go.

They had an in-camera session with all the members of the board without me and voted who they should let go.

During the year, the CEO ordered to audit my work many times, but they couldn’t find a loophole to use as a ground to terminate me for cause.

In the end, they let him go. Unfortunately, I also handed in my envelope. There is no way I would want to stay given what they had to put me through.

You’ll see that even this seemingly destructive setback had a silver lining.

A blow like this in one’s career *could* derail one’s trajectory if you allow it. The next job or the next client will always have that questioning mind and take the incident as a bit of red flag, even though you remained firm with your integrity. That’s one way to look at it and as human, or a woman in particular, it’s natural to feel less confident after such an experience.

How do you use the experience in a positive way?

## **Try to frame your perspectives in light of opportunities.**

Your success must not be driven by the circumstances around you. It will help to know that setbacks only make you better at overcoming more setbacks because it's never a smooth ride. There's always something that will test you, but the most important is sticking to your values no matter what. The good and bad deeds you did in the past will catch up at some point. If you consistently do good deeds, no ghosts will haunt you.

I also found that the break was what I so needed before taking another job. I have been able to reflect on where I would like to take my career forward and in a very timely fashion, I received a job offer to take on a new role as Director and General Manager of Newman Hattersley.

It was the start of my career turning businesses around. I couldn't have predicted that what seemed to be a setback was simply a door being opened for the next exciting opportunity; one that largely shaped my long-term career before I started my own business in executive coaching.

I'm glad I held on to my integrity. Doing so was easy. It was going through the whole ordeal that wasn't. But remind yourself of the lessons above. Always do the mirror test and make sure you like the person looking back at you. The best sleep is the one where you know you've done the right thing over personal gain and short-term security.

Ironically, *real* security can only come if you keep your integrity.

## BE YOU BUT BE PROFESSIONALLY YOU

As I was approaching a room for an executive meeting, I could hear the men talking and laughing and throwing the F bombs. The moment I opened the door, they all hushed, and the manner by which they were talking to each other changed. With me in the room, there was a tendency for people not to swear.

In fact, it didn't have to be me. It could be any woman. You put a woman in the mix and the room changes.

They did not realize that I wasn't offended at all by swearing. I do swear from time to time, but just not every other word. It also doesn't mean that because I swear, I'm using it loosely in a professional environment.

What am I trying to say here?

Whether you are in a leadership position or not, it is common that we are advised to always be ourselves. But being yourself doesn't give you the permission to exhibit bad behaviors. Showing *vulnerability* as a leader means being authentically you without stepping on other people's toes, making it uncomfortable for the other people in the room, or being rude.

Mindlessly swearing during a meeting is something I don't particularly approve. It's okay to speak casually outside business discussions but during a meeting, it's best to remain professional with your language, especially when there are executives in the room.

Meanwhile, when it comes to dressing up, I often tell the women I coach, *"Don't deny who you are but you have to be professional."*

If you are wearing a dress that attracts a lot of attention to some body parts or curves, it would be distracting, particularly for men. This is not an excuse for men to disrespect women. But as women in business, the need *to be heard* should help us make the right choice when it comes to the way we dress. If you wear something too distracting, that might be the point of focus instead of what you're saying.

And this follows a logic applicable to many things. Look at book covers and advertising billboards. They know how to use the right design in terms of colors, shape and images in order to deliberately redirect people's focus on what they want to advertise or talk about.

It's the same for dressing up at work. If you want to redirect people's focus on what you are going to say, make sure there is nothing that will distract them from hearing you out. If you want to be heard instead of being looked at, it would help to choose clothes that are appropriate for the business setting but also stylish.

As I shared in Chapter 1 on the subject of Culture Styles, I was told to change my dress when I first moved to a new job because they found it sexually provocative. It confused me at first, but I had to adapt to what they thought was the proper way to dress in order for them to want to follow me.

*“I should be able to dress the way I want to dress.”*

Unfortunately, and this goes for both men and women, you can't.

There's nothing that says you can't embrace style or flair, but aim to look great and also be heard at the same time.

You can BE YOU within the realm of something that's going to work.

What about the differences between the way a man and a woman give a handshake in a professional setting?

I'm a kinesthetic person. I can tell when a person's handshake was fake or insincere. This may sound trivial because people shake other people's hands all the time and hardly anyone ever notices the difference. But I do.

Whenever I feel insincerity, I ask myself, *Why do you have to fake it?*

A simple handshake helps me gauge a person easily.

It's not only the insincere handshakes that bother me. Some men want to put me in my place. When I meet them for the first time, they will shake my hand and squeeze it hard to signal their position as if they're throwing testosterone around. I try to meet them where they are by giving them a firm handshake.

Being professional includes using your language in the manner that is acceptable for all the people in the room and expressing sincerity even through a simple handshake.

## EXPRESS YOUR NEEDS

Women these days have been standing up against harassment in the workplace and it's a good thing. I support the movements to address it but there is another angle we might be missing here.

As women, we must help men to learn what's appropriate and what's inappropriate. Set the terms right from the start. If you're not comfortable with the touching, you need to express it. If you're not comfortable with the language they use to you, let them know. We don't need to know all the nuances of culture to determine if a situation is bad for us. Our instincts can tell us. Before anything worse happens, it's best to speak up.

A guy at work called me 'honey' a few times during a meeting. I didn't have to call him out in front of everybody in the room just to embarrass him. It's not necessary. I simply called his attention and it didn't even have to be private because I didn't want to make a big deal out of it. I only made sure we were a good distance from everybody's earshot. To have a little fun with it, I said, *"I don't get my honey where I get my money."* It's a way to diffuse any awkwardness. He never called me 'honey' again and there was not a trace of indifference between us.

For our own sakes, whenever possible, let's help men understand why something is inappropriate or offensive. This may not be applicable in extreme cases where there is sexual abuse, only for situations where men might appear a little insensitive. Unlike women, men *may* not be as perceptive of other people's feelings, especially women's.

In one meeting, a male executive started his statement with, *"Hey lady..."* I let him finish but I approached him afterwards, privately, to let him know that I found his way of addressing me as 'lady' condescending. *"When you said, 'Hey lady,' to me during the meeting, that's telling me that you're not treating me with respect. I perceived it to be disrespectful and it cut off my willingness to hear what you're about to say, and I want to listen to you. So, it would help if you stop calling me 'lady' even if you don't have any intention to offend."*

I didn't have to ask what other women thought and felt about it. I follow a principle which I called 'situation behavior impact' or owning my perception. What do I know? The other women probably didn't notice it and didn't feel offended at all. But I was and I had to express what I felt without the need to let other women in. I didn't want to influence them to have a negative impression of the person in question—that's far from my intention.

By owning the impact, I was able to bring the behavior to that person's attention, so he could change it.

## MANDATED DIVERSITY

Remember the time I was introduced as President of Newman Hattersley? There was emphasis on me being the first woman on the board. I was confident that I earned it by my own merits because I believed that I delivered results. In retrospect, it didn't sound right to say that I would be the *first* woman in the board as though I was put there to comply with mandated diversity.

I wouldn't want a job I did not earn.

In the UK and the US, women are being promoted to positions that only men used to occupy. Even if the woman earned the position by her own merits, she has been reduced to just *that woman* that fills-up the diversity quota.

Should a woman be embarrassed to be *that woman*? Or is there opportunity here?

I suppose that's where the world is going. Maybe it's not preferential treatment. Maybe it's how it must be for men and women to have equal opportunities for advancement.

I have used my abilities to get to where I am today and that is what I would like to instill in the women I coach. Women must not rely on diversity quota to get ahead. Work hard as you should, deliver results, hold on to

your integrity, be authentically you within professional boundaries, and you will not need preferential treatment.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Know when to turn around.** Fight as long as you can but when the situation is not serving you anymore, walk away. Have self-respect and know your worth. Don't let anyone rent a space in your head for free.
- **Again, know your worth.** Be careful of what you tell yourself. Be kind to yourself. Do not let the Imposter Syndrome hold you back from taking personal risks and stunt your success.
- **Hold on to your integrity.** Do not compromise your integrity for money and for other people. It will help you stay on track for the long-term.
- **What's the primary message of this chapter?** Gender roles shouldn't matter. Diversity quota shouldn't matter. Put that all away off your mind and focus on the value you can bring to the table. You don't need to outdo a man or other people. You only need to compete with yourself. Deliver results and let those speak for you.





## CHAPTER 3

# Money Makes the World Go Around



Money, in itself, is not the answer to happiness. It's true that there are some things money can't buy. But mishandling your money can cause a disaster and lead to unhappiness.

I bet you can't think of a time when you didn't think of money in a day, unless you're a child. You can get free lunch today. How about tomorrow? And the next day? And the day after that?

You've got to have the means to eat not just today but for as long as you live. That's why whatever you make today, you've got to put aside some of it for the future. It's the most basic thing about financial management that you can learn without going to school. You don't need to know the complexities of a Profit and Loss statement because it basically arises from common sense and good judgment.

This basic knowledge on financial management is consistent with the message of *Eat While You Dream*. The only way to be prepared for an *uncertain future* is to be able to pull something out of a safety net that you build before you ever need it.

Life will kick you hard in the ass if you're only addressing the short term without being prepared for the long term. We cannot delegate this. It is our responsibility to manage and know our own finances.

## FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE ... A LOST ART

Why are too many people still struggling with their finances?

Financial intelligence has become a lost art.

Throughout my career going to different places as well as now that I'm consulting with thirty-six CEOs, I'm shocked at how even executives and entrepreneurs lack financial knowledge. They're brilliant, they have aptitude for what they do, they can solve complex problems and can build massive engineering equipment, but they have no clue why they're not making money.

Currently, I'm coaching CEOs who started their own companies and have now become entrepreneurs. Coming from corporate world, they relied heavily on subject matter experts: the controllers, CFOs and accountants. They may have been presidents or CEOs of multinational companies who have massive knowledge running a business, but they lack sufficient financial knowledge to make money for their own companies.

Most of the time, they're chasing the shiny thing. From Chapter 1, you have learned about the Change Style Indicators: The Pragmatists, the Conservers and the Originators. These CEOs turned entrepreneurs are typically Originators. They want the shiny thing but lose touch with the financial part. If they manage to put food on the table, if they have their boat, their car, their lake house, their beach house, they're good.

But when you ask them: *How about when you turn 70? When you exit this business, how are you going to sustain your lifestyle?*

Let's explore the answers to these questions.

### READ YOUR NUMBERS

I always required every member of my leadership team to walk me through their financial statements. If they have never set up any record, I help them build one using the good ol' T accounts: the debits and the credits. I teach

them how to setup a chart of accounts. I teach them how to read the balance sheet, the P&L and, most importantly, the statement of cash flows.

When you ask them how they know they're making money, they look at the balance in their bank accounts.

The problem with that is, your bank account is not going to tell you your net worth. You've got to know where your money goes, how much money you have in your non-monetary assets, and your spending habits.

You've got to *really* know: **Who's got the money, honey?**

Is it you? Or is it your debtors, your subscriptions, your mortgage?

*"But Lorraine, we don't usually share these numbers?"*

*"Yes, we do,"* I told them. *"I want to understand how your decisions create an impact on the company's financial statements."*

I didn't need to know all the details of each of their money transactions. My objective was to teach them to understand the importance of margin—the difference between gross profit, contribution margin and net income. I wanted them to understand how their expenses behave. To do that, I needed to bring it close to home. I believe in the whole person. If they are prudent with their own spending habits, they can make better decisions for the company as well.

I went through the process with them. It's just for a couple of hours and it's time well spent. Every month when we were reviewing the company's financial statements, I asked them, *"Tell me, what questions would you ask the Controller right now?"*

They should be able to know if there's a mistake or something's not right. I would like to believe all people are honest and trustworthy, but we cannot leave the possibility of fraud to chance. I wanted to train them to have an inquisitive mind. It's not that I don't trust people. It's simply called due diligence.

I did forensic audits for a whole year which exposed me to several fraud cases. People will always have a way to hide stuff. Sometimes, the intention to hide was not there. Some people can be clueless that they're bordering on fraud.

A few years ago, I did an internal audit on a government-run hospital in Canada. I couldn't reconcile the bank balance against the telephone bills. During those days, if you used the hospital's telephone to make personal calls, you have to highlight the bill for those calls and pay the company back. I was tracing where the payments went to, but I couldn't find them.

I went to the department in question which was composed of doctors, nurses and medical assistants. I asked them, *"Can you help me understand something on the telephone bill? I see that you've highlighted your personal calls on the bill, but I can't find where the money went."*

*"Oh, we don't send them to Accounting. They're in here,"* said a medical assistant as she's pointing to a big ceramic frog. *"It's in Freddie the frog,"* she said.

Freddie the Frog was stuffed with all the cash from everybody's phone calls and they used it to send a birthday card and a birthday cake to whoever was celebrating for the month. It's averaging \$600 a month and they could very well use that to throw a nice birthday dinner at a steak house!

It was done innocently. Nobody had the intention to defraud the company, but it was happening without anyone realizing.

That was why I wanted my leadership team to learn how to read their numbers so they can make better decisions in terms of money not only for themselves but for the organization.

## THE POWER OF 1%

This next story serves as a prelude to what's coming in Chapter 4: The Turnaround. I turned a company around simply by cutting out 1% from *everything*.

You don't need to calculate what's 1% of anything. I'm only using it as a hyperbole to mean small cuts or the minimum amount that will not make a difference from one account but can add up and become significant to the whole.

I challenged people and asked: *"If I cut your paycheck by 1%, would you notice it? Would your whole lifestyle change?"*

Most people would say no but combine them all together and you'll get something.

This is the premise by which I introduced the concept to the company: To find the 1% and use it to invest in the fix.

How did I find the money?

I looked into the one area where offices mindlessly spend money.

I went from office to office and found walls stacked with copy and stationery papers. People had been hoarding and storing and I found out that they kept on purchasing. There was enough stock for the year and even for personal use. When I pulled out the drawers, they were loaded with office supplies they don't even use. They have pens of assorted colors and more than they ever needed. Some of those pens were even of premium brands which cost fifteen times more than a regular cheap pen. In the printing room, there was an excessive supply of toner.

I took the trolley and told them, *"I'm not saying you can't have a pen. But you can only use them one at a time."*

I recovered all excess copy and stationery papers and created a stationery inventory at the reception. People can come in and grab it. I'm not joking about this.

I told the sales guy that when they come back to the office every night after their stay in the hotel, get the pen from the hotel room and put it in the box. *"Don't toss them aside. We're going to reuse them and we're going to stop buying more 'til we need more."*

We didn't have to buy stationery, toner and pens for six months. I hired a company that setup a stationery room where people can request for office supplies if and when they needed them. Nobody was allowed to order stationery or take the whole inventory. I hired another company to track the usage and maintain the minimum quantities. They will order when inventories were down to the minimum. We followed the system called JIT or just-in-time.

It worked!

Just from trimming down the office supplies, we saved \$150,000 net of the expenses incurred to hire a company that will manage the supplies inventory. The monthly fees to pay the company was also much lower than if we had to buy supplies every month.

I took that short-term money to invest in a long-term solution in the Production unit.

The company had been behind on shipments, so I went to Production and inquired what was causing the delays. I had to fix some issues on the flow of direct materials which I will mention later, but the real cause of delays was 'svetsrepar.'

"*Svetsrepar?*" I asked. It was my first few months in Sweden and I hadn't learned the language.

"*It's welding repairs,*" said one of the engineers.

Before a product goes out the door, it's rotating through the hands of different engineers working the day and night shifts. We're talking about 16-20 feet turbine valves which take months to complete. The experienced guys will come and finish their part of the job. A weak link comes in, an inexperienced one, and do something that the next guy will have to repair before doing what he needed to do. It's like two steps forward but always one step backward.

I called on the experts and sent them to a certification program using some of the money saved from office supplies. By being certified, they've become mentors. I released more resources out of the savings from office supplies

as additional compensation for experts turned mentors. Before anyone gets into the cycle, that person must be qualified by their mentors so they're not going to have to rework the previous workers' efforts.

In the beginning, I slowed everything down to educate the people. Once the people are educated and qualified to perform their tasks, I injected the process. I made the long-term investment of reorganizing the layout of the plant and streamlining the workflow which cut the lead time from seven months to six weeks. Just by doing that, the company's net loss went down by double digits.

The reduction in lead time was not even just 1%. You're not aiming for exactly 1%. Anything equal or more than that is the goal when you are looking for savings.

Where else did I look for 1%?

I went over the discretionary spending, i.e., marketing and logistics. I asked them: *"How are we going to get additional 1% from every dollar you spend on marketing?"*

We figured that there are two ways to do it. One is the use of **strategic pricing**. The second one is by **increasing value proposition**.

If you buy milk every week, any sudden change in pricing will catch your attention. How about other commodities you don't normally buy on a regular basis? Assume you crave macadamia chocolate bars from time to time. If the price doubled, would you have noticed? There's a high likelihood that you wouldn't.

From a marketing perspective, you can add 1% into the price and it will not attract attention from the customer.

That's strategic pricing.

Find the products which are not being consumed by the same buyer regularly and adjust the pricing to your advantage by just a little bit. It will add up.

When I left the company, the red had turned to green. The company has been profitable since.

Meanwhile, there are two approaches to increasing value proposition to get the additional revenue or margin. One is by **rebranding** and the other is by **unbundling**.

Using the nuclear valves as an example, they can leverage on safety without being an alarmist. They can do one option to sell one premium product with zero failure rate or offer two lower tier products and build in a redundancy. The margin on the first option is higher because in terms of product guarantee, there's only one product to replace. This is just one example; it can be any product in any space.

When it comes to unbundling, make your customers understand the value of the whole package and make it known to them that each product comprising the package has its individual cost.

Let's use the eBook publishing business as an example. If the client committed to two edits as part of the package, any further edits beyond the two will be charged on top of the agreed price. If they wanted to change the book cover at the last minute after it's gone to print, add the individual cost of redesigning into the price of the package. There's a margin on that.

Don't give away your products, services or knowledge for free.

The power of 1% is the key for me to get into the mindset of every single person. I didn't need to give them a shock by asking for too much. What is 1%? It can hardly change anything from the point of view of the individual or a department but collectively, it can bring value to the organization as a whole.

## PURGE, DON'T SPLURGE

Everywhere I go, people have the same mindset when it comes to company budget.

Big corporations engage in annual financial planning to set the budget for the following year and the 3-5 years after that. We will not get too technical



but for the purpose of this, we will use the typical and generic names being used for this corporate activity.

Original Budget is the money allotted for the subject year. Long-range plans are the forecasts for the years following the subject year.

Each business unit is allocated an Original Budget for all their activities for the year such as marketing, promotional merchandises, overheads, personnel cost, etc. Depending on the company's discretion, they review these budgets every month (less common but can happen) or quarterly (common) and twice a year (usually after the first quarter and after 8 months).

If a business unit is allocated an annual budget of \$1M for marketing, they would want to spend it all. At the end of the first quarter on the first review, they will make sure they have used up all the budget pro-rated for the said quarter, because they didn't want to return it or reallocate it to other business units. Worse, it can be totally cut out from the company budget.

Even if they could reallocate it to the rest of the year and still retain their original \$1M budget, they didn't want to risk it. They feared that any savings might be taken away from them. As a result, they'll use it up because they don't want to lose it.

In fact, it's not difficult for them to use up the budget. They can splurge on travels and meals. They can blow up their marketing expenses. They can purchase more promotional merchandises. And where do these *excess* merchandise go? They give them to their families and friends for personal use or as a company giveaway during corporate events.

Is it necessary?

None of the excess spending is necessary.

At the last quarter of the year, when there are expenses that have not been caught despite the many forecasted, it would have helped if there was extra cash. And if there was none, well, the employee bonuses are the easiest to cut.

That is the last thing we want.

I want to instill in everyone's mindset that their spending behavior can affect the full picture. The ripple effect is hard to control when the money has already been spent.

Here are some of the important questions to ask before spending:

*Do I need it, or do I just want it?*

*Will it generate a return on investment?*

*When do I **really** need it?*

If it can be deferred, there's always the Long-Range plans to allocate it to, even though the current reality is far from this.

Don't spend when you don't need. Don't buy when you don't have to buy. Push off as long as you can. There will be a ripple effect as well but, this time, it's for the benefit of all.

## SUSTAINABLE GAINS

In order to balance the short term and long term, stop chasing the almighty dollar to increase the profits today and lose it later. Hold the status quo, grab the profits from short-term savings, and invest it in the long term.

As a CEO, you're only as good as the last quarter. In a publicly traded company, you get one quarter of grace. If you fail by the second quarter, you're not there anymore.

We've covered why most entrepreneurs fail to make money. They're chasing after the shiny thing but losing touch on the financial part. During a turnaround, their first course of action is to cut heads. I don't do this. That's not my strategy.

If I downsized by a hundred people, I'm going to save money. But how am I going to get anything done in the business? I may just as well shut the doors

than to try to turn it around. Cutting heads is like cutting organizational knowledge and intellectual property. There are businesses that have grown that way, but they had to retrain new people coming in who may take time to become adept at what they do. And if they don't give excellent results, that can lead to a higher turnover. Frequent spending on recruitment and training is not sustainable.

People shouldn't be the first to go out the door. In my strategy, *The Power of 1%*, I looked first into small cuts that I could collect and invest. I invested in a certification program that educated the people which resulted to a massively reduced lead time in the production of nuclear valves. There's always money tied up somewhere in the process. You just need to keep looking.

Where else can money be hiding?

From the process.

Make it easy for your employees to do their jobs. Map the process.

In the same company where I applied my strategy, *The Power of 1%*, I tore down all the walls that were dividing the different production units. I created a supermarket for inventory because they were all over the place. You could find them in everybody's work station.

In the supermarket, we setup a section that receives the inbound raw materials from suppliers. I rearranged the layout of the plant so that the flow of these materials followed the production workflow. After receiving the raw materials, these were sorted and turned over to the cutting station. They fed it into the machine where it was lifted into the next stage until it reached the final outbound section as finished goods where it was readied for shipping.

I didn't have to cut heads but instead, I trained the staff to perform the process without unnecessary movements and distractions.

Last but not least, find money from making the process easy for your customers. Make it easy for them to do business with you. Setup your

website and make sure it is easy to navigate and loads up fast. Keep your lines open during reasonable business hours and don't let your customers become irate. Listen to their needs, offer solutions and provide the best customer relations possible.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Practice due diligence.** Learn how to read the P&L, the balance sheet and the statement of cash flow. That way, you will know if something's not right.
- **SAVE TO INVEST.** Find the hidden money somewhere in the process or excessive assets. Apply the strategy, *The Power of 1%*. Do not cut heads until you've exhausted other options. You'll realize you don't need to let people go because they're your intellectual property.
- **Balance the short term and the long term.** Think of sustainable gains instead of chasing the profits today and losing it later.
- **What is the primary message of this chapter?** Be responsible with your own money. We cannot delegate this. If you are prudent with your own money, you can make better decisions not just for yourself, but also for the organization.

## CHAPTER 4

# The Turnaround



My experience turning businesses around gave me the lessons that shaped my recipe for success which I call *Eat While You Dream*. Going into a company knowing you've got 90 days to figure out whether it's going to stay or not was a huge responsibility. A responsibility that will determine the fate of the 300-500 families relying on their income from the company.

*Will the company remain in business?*

*Is there a threat of closure looming in the horizon?*

*Is it recommended for investment or growth?*

I've got 90 days to pull it off. I've got some work to do.

Think of bread. What are the ingredients for baking a bread?

It has three main ingredients—yeast, flour, sugar. Add some water, salt and oil and you're good to go. Put them all together, knead the dough, part into pieces and put in the oven. How easy is that?

It seems even an inexperienced baker can make a bread at home... or not.

Baking follows strict measurements. If you get any of it wrong, you're out of luck. Your bread may come out rubbery or hard as stone. Where did you go wrong?

Similar to turnarounds, knowing the ingredients isn't enough. You need to know the exact measurements and execute properly. You can throw away the bread and try again. But you will not have another chance at turnarounds. Your decisions will determine if the company will continue to be a going concern or history.

For this purpose, I followed eight steps to turn a company around:

1. Rally the troops.
2. Put the right people in the right places.
3. Reset the group.
4. Cut out the waste.
5. Grow your people.
6. Listen to your customers.
7. Put the customers in the room.
8. Align core values.

## RALLY THE TROOPS

In order to get a buy-in from the people, I start with safety because nobody can argue with that. I need to take care of the person sitting next to me as well as myself at work.

In Switzerland, there are basic legislations on safety. The Headquarters set their own company safety rules. But I have set my own standards which far exceed the minimum requirements that accompany the legislations, or the generic rules set by the company.

The safety manager once walked in the plant without wearing a personal protective equipment (PPE). I warned him but he did it again.

*"I'm not joking here. I'm telling you, if I come down here one more time and see you without proper equipment on, I'm going to fire you. Do you understand me?"*

He just looked at me and gave that smirk.

He had to read the instruments for the functional testing. It's a critical process in the plant and if it goes wrong, it could explode, and the building could go with it.

*"But all of these fog up,"* he complained.

*"Go buy the ones that don't fog up. I don't care about how much money they cost, just get them and wear them,"* I said.

He just didn't like wearing glasses. I went down and fired him, and people freaked out.

*"You can't do that,"* they all exclaimed in shock.

I can understand that. We're not crazy about him as he's not a particularly pleasant colleague, but his reputation for being phenomenal and a talented terror was known across the organization. However, he didn't follow the number one thing I talked about from the day I set foot in the building and that's safety.

If he doesn't wear those glasses and something happens, we all go with him.

It left a hole and it hurt bad for about three months, but I gained a high level of respect as a leader for executing according to strategy and having zero tolerance for bad behavior. By being serious about safety, they soon understood that I cared, that it's not just about command and control.

## PUT THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT PLACES

In every company I turned around, one of the most important questions I would ask is: Do I have the right people in the right places doing the right things?

I started by analyzing individual strengths, especially people in my leadership team. I would run them through Tom Rath's Strengthsfinder to determine what their top 5 strengths are and by which order they come because this is also important.

Strengthsfinder consists of 34 themes representing strengths and their descriptions. Once an individual completed the assessment, he or she would know what his or her top five strengths are and receive personalized insights of those top five.

According to Tom Rath, the odds of you finding someone with the same Top Five themes in the same order are one in 33.4 million. That's how unique each one of us is!

Let's compare a salesperson to a hunter. A hunter is thriving when he's out there chasing his prey. If that is how a hunter is, can you imagine him a salesperson sitting behind a computer, updating databases and KPIs, writing notes on post-its, and still thriving?

I doubt it.

All that salesperson wants to do is to get out and hunt and sell.

A person who complements him is an inside sales associate who's taking calls and updating customer information while he's off hunting the next customer.

I had my son go through the same process. I made an appointment with him to come to my office and had him run through Strengthsfinder and Myers Briggs.

*"We'll figure out what you would like to do for the rest of your life,"* I offered.

*"Mom, you know I'm not going to be in business,"* he replied.

*"Just trust me. If it doesn't work, you're still in control of your own destiny,"* I assured him.

*"I don't want to sit at a desk, that's not me. I want to be out there. I want to be in the middle of whatever it is. I want it to be physical,"* he explained further.

Based on the results of his assessments and based on what he told me, we've narrowed it down to four big categories: law enforcement, the fire department, the emergency medical services or the military.



He attended a career day and visited a few police officers that we knew in the neighborhood. He went to the police station, met some people and came to back to me saying, “*I want to be a cop.*”

At 20, he became a cadet on the Canadian police force and has been a full officer for five years as of this writing. He’s going steady and by his tenth year, he wants to become a K9 officer.

Clearly, it worked for him. He’s doing what he loves and he’s in it for the long haul.

In a recent work by Marcus Buckingham called *How to Succeed at Work*, he said, “*If you want to win at work, you need to spend most of your time cultivating and refining your strengths and a limited amount of time trying to manage your weaknesses.*”

We can put the Pareto principle to work here. If we spend 80% of our time playing to our strengths and only 20% working on our weaknesses, we can showcase the unique things about us and make better and greater contribution.

While observing what energizes and what drains people, I noticed that some people can be responsible and be skilled at something, even though that’s not where their strengths lie. Somehow, they get fulfillment out of that. They receive recognition and get a good pay. But they remain unaware. They never realize that they’re not operating to their full potential.

There was an operations guy who was running our customized kit, an engineered solution-based product for our customers. He’s skilled at what he does but he procrastinates a lot. His outputs may be great, but always late.

I moved him over to Key Account Manager, two levels down in the organization. It did sound like a demotion, but I was coming from a strategic position. I have observed him and figured he might be better off managing our accounts than customizing product kits.

He was pissed. He hated me.

How can I come in and change his life that way? What was I thinking?

That move also hit the financials, but I remained firm with my decision.

I gave him the responsibility of building the KOCH Industries account, the whole oil and gas and petrochemicals division. We targeted three new customers and he got them all to do business with us. He's a hunter and he didn't know!

About 18 months later, he came back to me and said, "*You know what, I'd never thought I'd say this, but I'm having fun again.*"

He hated me for six months. But his life changed for the better.

This story is reminiscent of Marcus Buckingham's experience as a boy which he shared in his 2006 work called *Trombone Player Wanted*. He had been playing the trombone and was good at it, but he was being tugged in a different direction. He wanted to play the drums.

Most of us are like Marcus and the operations guy—we have been doing something that we may be good at but wasn't really our strength. At the end of the day, it drains us.

To know that you are in your area of strength, assess how you feel at the beginning of the day versus the end of the day. If you are still pumped up and looking forward to doing more of it the next day, you are playing to your strengths.

You are the right person in the right seat.

## RESET THE GROUP

I move people a lot as in the story earlier. When restructuring an organization, I put people in the *right seats*, I create new jobs and put people in *new seats*, and I let go of people in *no seat*. Those in no seat are people whose competencies are not aligned with their strengths.

I have emphasized in Chapter 3 that I don't cut heads. I really don't unless necessary, where there's nothing for the person in the company. Having them stay will also be a waste of their skills which they can very well use in other organizations.

The previous topic is all about assessment. This topic is about moving people around based on that assessment. To make the people of the organization do the right things, you need to reset the group. It doesn't have to be the same mix you've found when you came in. You must look for people in and outside the organization to fill the right jobs for the turnaround.

One of my clients hit what I'll call a pivot. They hit a certain level where they wanted to scale up, but they couldn't, and they couldn't understand why.

It was because they built the company around themselves. They hired people to help them with trivial tasks they don't want to do. When they got to a level where they were scaling up, they were constrained by the capacity of the person at the top. They had become the limiting factor in why the company could't grow.

The employees below them are not better than they are. They follow instructions well and they make progress. They might be good at what they do, but are they going to be able to scale up the company?

Unlikely.

They've hit their ceiling. Even though you want them to perform at a certain level, they can't. You've got to decide: Do I develop this person, or does he need to go?

If he's just not the right person, I let him go. Don't think I take it lightly. I lose sleep each time I have to let someone go.

When I came to the US, the company had just one huge sales force. There was no project management for big jobs that required manufacturing of multiple different products. It's not a fast-moving commodity that you just

pick and pack. These were big projects! There was no system to track how the products move from production units to the customers.

After a salesperson sold something, they would go back to the shop and they couldn't tell you where we were with any project. Somebody needed to manage the process from design approval to construction of materials to functional testing and packing before they shipped them out the door.

I tried to enlist the Vice President of Sales, but he was having a hard time adapting to change. I didn't want him to leave but we could not get him on board, and he didn't believe in where we were heading.

What should I do?

I looked for people outside the organization. I had to change how people thought about selling by making it *customer and solutions driven* rather than commodity driven and that created a seat. I brought in a new person who took on a brand new role as Project Manager.

I looked for people who didn't need the CEO to tell them what to do. They only needed the CEO to set out the vision and then they could execute based on their expertise.

My job is to bring talented individuals together to build a high-performing team. It doesn't matter where they come from, whether internally or externally. Once you get them working together, there's no stopping them.

## CUT OUT THE WASTE

This was prefaced by *The Power of 1%* from Chapter 3 where I've been able to find \$150,000 savings from office supplies. In order to balance the short term and the long term, you have to make money to stabilize the company. How do you create the resource to spend?

Cut out the waste.

Let me refresh your memory of what happened when I took stock of office supplies.

I shut the company down for a day. I gathered all the excess office supplies—toner, copy papers, stationery, pens—and created a stationery room where they can request for what they need... and just what they need. I reorganized the plant so that the flow of inventories during production goes smoothly from one unit to the next until it's ready to be shipped out the door. We cleaned up everything and started fresh.

Coming in from another country, there was a lot of resentment the day I walked in. Seeing the need for a lot of process improvement, I thought it was a great opportunity to implement what I learned from being certified in Lean Sigma and other efficiency tools. But I didn't call the process improvements by any name. How did I approach the fix?

I avoided jargons or names. This has a lot to do with culture. If you are coming to implement an efficiency system and you start calling it something, throwing jargons they've never heard of, there will be more resistance. It will be harder to get them on board for the change.

People often forget the hidden money from waste. They downsize their head count as that seems to be a quick way to build the resource. Shareholders will not hand you a whole whack of cash to fix the company. You've got to find the money. But you must look for savings first.

## GROW YOUR PEOPLE

When I turn businesses around, I don't cut heads right away. You wouldn't want to do that because you're not only losing organizational knowledge, you're taking out the willingness of those left to help with the turnaround. They get demotivated, and they start counting the days wondering when it's their turn. What it does for morale is awful.

This topic has also been prefaced by Chapter 3's *The Power of 1%*, so let me refresh your memory.

In Sweden, there had been delays in the shipment of valves to the customers. It's taking them seven months to complete the whole project. Because of the process improvements I was implementing, some people had been leaving. If somebody left, I let them leave and I don't add until I get the

process right. I took a step back, slowed down and analyzed the process to see where I should apply the people in the process.

To cut the lead time, I used some of the savings from office supplies to develop mentors out of the experts within the company to train other engineers. That way, they don't have to do a rework of the job done by a guy from the previous shift. Each guy in the cycle must put his stamp that he's done the job with the best quality.

This cut the lead time from seven months to six weeks.

By spending some of the savings to develop people, the improvements in the process were able to create capacity which more than doubled the size of the company. I did not have to cut heads nor add a single person.

Growing people also includes building a high-performing team.

When I need to build a layer of management that doesn't exist, I create development plans. I start by building the performance culture of the organization and developing the high-potentials fast.

I ask myself, how do I get my high-potentials moving in the organization and create the best leadership as we're moving up?

I also foresee possible disruptions such as people getting pregnant and taking maternity leave or people getting sick and unable to come back to work quickly. If somebody was out and something happened where a big hole was created, we would be left in a critical situation because we were dependent upon that one person.

For this, I create a bench.

When I was working at the private school, we had bus routes that were within a two-hour radius of the college. When the driver was sick and can't show up, we didn't have an extra person on the bench to fill in. To have someone to fill the gap, I got myself a bus driver's license to substitute the driver when he's out.

I only ever had to do it once and I took the mini bus, not the big bus. It trained me for hauling a 26-foot trailer. When my kids got older and we needed someone to maneuver a massive trailer, I was the only that could park that thing.

In business turnarounds, I would get all my people trained up and ready to move. Even when no one is out, if they're ready to move up, I would never deny them the opportunity because growing people is a passion I have. I love helping people get to where they want to go. This is my favorite part of the turnaround process.

I also bear in mind that my time for the turnaround is timebound. Within the first few weeks, I pick the right person to replace me once I'm done with the job.

It's a full circle. I make sure every piece of the puzzle is sorted before I go.

## LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

A customer wanted the maintenance manuals out within six weeks. Normally, we deliver this along with the product which has a lead time of 8-12 months.

What was prompting them to want to get the manuals ahead of the product?

Our customer was receiving advance payment for the product when they sell it to their customers, even before the product gets shipped. It's easy to dismiss this opportunity to make an improvement. What's another two weeks or so? They'll have to wait for the product anyway.

But I saw the opportunity. I listened to their needs.

*"Let's get the manuals out in the first six weeks,"* I told the team. *"We can get paid in advance before we deliver the product."*

I aligned all of our project milestones and deliverables around the customer's cash flow. We get paid when they're paid. Their customers were happy, and

the advance payments were good for cashflow. The sooner we got paid, the better.

In another instance, a customer said, *“As long as the product gets shipped, we don’t need your sales guy coming in telling us what’s available and what we need to do every single month.”*

In the old system, they’re placing their orders to the sales guy who visits. But that’s not what they want. I asked them, *“How else can I help?”*

*“If you could make it easier for us to do business with you, that would be fantastic,”* the customer offered.

Instead of sending a sales guy to visit, I set up an online portal where they could place their orders. It made the process faster and reduced the distractions because they didn’t have to make a personal interaction with the sales guy—who can then focus his time getting more customers.

My strategy has always been customer focused. Ultimately, it’s the customers who drive the sales. When they’re satisfied with the solutions we provide, they do more business with us and create leads and referrals.

It’s not enough that they come to us for business. We can lose them at any time if they find a better solution. Sustainable gains come from customers who maintain a long-term business relationship with us because we provide them the best and fastest solutions that are aligned to their needs.

After a massive downsizing, a company asked for my help to rebuild their company. But first, I needed to diagnose what the problem was.

As I’ve mentioned in the earlier pages many times, cutting heads is the last thing I do during a turnaround. But one company made such mistake. They laid off all of their engineers during the 2008 downturn and lost a huge chunk of their organizational knowledge. It has been tough for the company since then.

This is why I don’t let people go too quickly. The amount of information you can lose is scary.



How did they want me to help them?

*“We need you to be our engineer. We need you to diagnose our problem and tell us what to do,”* they said.

They wanted to make the most tortilla chips and ship as much as they could in one day. They needed their systems to stay up and maintain consistent quality despite the loss of their original workforce. They shared their whole strategy with me, and I called it the ‘boardroom solution.’ I applied the same solution for Aricia, EDF in France, Fluor, Danone and Exxon Mobile among others.

This time around, I used the ‘boardroom solution’ with PepsiCo.

I walked around the company to learn and assess the existing process. Using what we learned earlier, I reset the organization structure and put the right people in the right places. But the most important question was: What does PepsiCo want?

No, it wasn’t just making the most tortilla chips. They wanted the center aisle at Walmart, their biggest customer. The center aisle is where all customers walk through. They wanted to increase their volume and score the best product placement.

Do we just go to Walmart and talk them into giving PepsiCo the center aisle for additional fees?

It’s not as simple as that.

We needed to know, what does Walmart value the most?

They wanted to reduce their carbon footprint.

With this knowledge, I found a solution to help PepsiCo achieve their goal.

I helped them change up their systems and processes so that they don’t consume excessive carbon footprints in manufacturing their products. That is the commitment they made to Walmart. This is the commitment

Walmart made to their consumers. They wanted to recover more energy than they consume.

With the improved systems and processes, PepsiCo was able to produce a high volume of tortilla chips with less of a carbon footprint and got the center aisle that they wanted because they took to heart what Walmart *truly* wanted.

When listening, do not just take what your customers say; assess their *true needs* based on the messages they don't say with words. Usually, these messages are attached with the brand image and social responsibility they hold dearly.

Unlike the first two examples, this one wasn't straightforward. PepsiCo didn't get the answer upfront. My superpower in business turnarounds is that, I can take complex situations and synthesize them into a process or a solution to deliver the value that the customer wants.

If I can grow my customers and help them with their growth and profitability, chances are they're going to align with us as their vendor. Because they have a vested interest and they reap the benefits, the money starts to flow.

## PUT THE CUSTOMERS IN THE ROOM

When I was in the USA, I visited more than 122 customers to understand how we can better provide for their needs. I wasn't there to sell them anything. I paid them a visit and just listened.

My only question to them was: *What would you like me to bring to you if you could change one thing about the company?*

This question is important to understand not just their core needs but how our organization will respond to them *as a team*.

Earlier, I've emphasized the importance of listening to the customers. The other angle to this is how the people in the organization put themselves in front of our customers. From the customer's perspective, how do they see us?

*Do they feel that we have their best interest?*

*Does the leadership team speak through the voice of the customers?*

*What effect are they having on our customers?*

The key to putting a good perspective of the company in the eyes of the customers is consistent messaging.

Make sure that everybody in the company is doing the same things and speaking the same language when talking to the customers. Come out with a single voice. Put the customers in the room.

Imagine this scenario: The leadership team gathered in a board room to make a big decision involving a customer. Let's assume I wasn't in the room for some reason. Suddenly, somebody said, "*Lorraine proposed this from our first meeting, but I don't agree with her.*"

If the customer was in the room on those two meetings, he would be confused why the leadership team does not come out with a consistent message.

When you go into the room as a functional leader, you are part of the leadership team, so you have to put your hat on. When you go out the door, you can speak as a functional leader but not inside the room.

It doesn't matter what department you're in. We're all working towards one goal together so it's imperative that we speak the same language in front of the customer.

To make this possible, I use an icon to represent the customer. It can be anything. It could be a phone or a coffee mug. I once used a red folder for this purpose. Other times, I would use something simple that they can carry with them to remind them when they're traveling.

Remember that part of my strategies is to reset the group or build high-performing teams. It's not just the right people. They've got to work together

as a high-performing team and that includes being able to represent the company with a single voice.

## ALIGN CORE VALUES

When you have the wrong person in the right seat, you are faced with one of the most difficult decisions you'll ever have to make during a turnaround. This is the hardest one to execute.

What does it mean to have the wrong person in the right seat?

These are people who are doing well. They're phenomenal. They can deliver results half the time than the next person. But their attitude stinks.

They are rude to people. They can be belligerent. They are non-conformers—always bending the company rules. They don't care what you're doing for he or she follows his own rules. They stir the pot when you're trying to make changes to improve the process. They're what I refer to as a 'talented terror' or 'toxic person.'

I suppose you are reminded by the story of the safety manager I fired for not wearing PPE or personal protective equipment. He's the kind of talented terror I'm talking about.

People are afraid of them. They don't like them, but nobody can question their performance. People are literally tip-toeing around them, afraid of what they might get into if they rub them the wrong way.

You have to get rid of them. They can infect or infest the entire organization.

According to Peter Drucker, "*Culture eats strategy for breakfast.*"

When you allow toxic people to affect the culture of the company, other people will be demotivated or become toxic, too. This can derail the progress of the organization no matter how talented they are.

The sooner you get rid of them, the better it will be for the company. People will panic a little bit because that person knew and did so much.

But it's a big, big world out there. There's always another human being that has just as much, if not more talent, than the individual.

Again, going back to building high-performing teams, it's not possible when one of them is a toxic person. There has to be core value alignment so that people can work together with a high-level of mutual respect.



## TICK THE BOX

Here is a story that captured most of the lessons I learned from turning businesses around. It includes how to deal with cultural differences, how to make people change their minds without telling them what to do, how gender roles affected how they viewed me as a leader and so much more. You will also see how I applied some of the strategies we covered in this chapter.

For the first three months in Switzerland, we were not succeeding. They have a wide power distance. They follow the hierarchical levels and those at the bottom cannot easily approach those at the top. The ones at the top must go through all levels of management before they can speak to those below.

I also realized they don't like the flavor of the month where somebody comes in and makes changes and then he or she leaves. In other words, they didn't like the presence of a foreigner.

But we had a job to do. As a publicly-traded company, they were getting ready to go to the investors with the results, and the remaining shipments must come through before the end of the year in order to be counted.

How did I approach this situation?

I listened. That's what I did for the first three months. This is part of the strategy I called *L to the Power of 3 – Learn, Leverage, Lead*.

In the *Learn* phase, I listened a lot to understand why people are doing what they're doing and why they're doing it that way. Despite this, I couldn't get them to get on board with me.

I called my leadership team and said, *"I was sent here to fix things. I've been trying to do it your way for three months without yielding any result. I'm going to ask you to do it my way for the last few months of the year."*

I did not ask them to engage. I asked them to comply.

*"If it doesn't work and we don't succeed, I'm gone anyway,"* I told them.

They were not going to keep me there because the whole purpose of sending me there was to get the shipments out by the end of the year. If they go out the following year, it will not count for the year end results.

*"But if we succeed, we will stop working the minute the last order ships out and you'll have the rest of the year off. That's what I'm prepared to give back. Just give it a try,"* I said.

They went off and came back saying, *"Lorraine, we can't do this."*

They were trying to make me fail. There's a reason why they didn't want me there.

The Swiss company was a supplier for the Canadian company. I was from the Canadian company beating them up for supply. And now I'm *that* Canadian in Switzerland.

What did I do to get them to follow me?

I parked myself in the middle of the shop floor. I never had an office there. I had a little table and a big old white board. I put all the orders down and wrote all the steps across the top so they can see visually see who's got the ball for each order. When they finished their part, they would tick the box and hand it over the next person.

*"At the end of every day, I want you to come here and tick the boxes,"* I said.

But they were complaining saying, *“This is phony!”*

For them, I was just a Canadian who came in with some tick the box sort of thing. I told them, *“We do more than tick the boxes here. I want you to do the work and then tick the box to say that you’ve done the work.”*

In the beginning, they were making fun of it. They’re cynical and sarcastic as they were doing it. But I was getting out the bells and dancing every time somebody ticked a box.

All of a sudden, they started competing against each other. A peer pressure developed among them. People were like, *“You haven’t ticked a box in three days. What are you working on? We can’t get to the next step if you don’t do yours.”*

The people who were slowing down the process, either intentionally or not, stepped up and did their part. The bottleneck was going away.

I offered help to speed up the process. They had me out pressure washing valves. I was packing. I was doing labels. I was copying history docketts. You name it. As long as it doesn’t require too much technical knowledge, I was willing to fill in.

And we hit it!

We hit it two weeks before Christmas.

An officer came to me and asked, *“How on earth did you do it?”*

I said, *“It’s true that culture played a role in it, but it was more than cultural adaptation. It was recognizing that they wanted to be in control.”*

They didn’t want me controlling them. They wanted to be autonomous. They wanted to have control over their own destiny.

I let them do it however they need to do it, but I needed visibility. Nobody gets to work in isolation. We are all interdependent. I gave them a deadline and they went off managing themselves and the job.

The tick box method was a system through which we can communicate without having distracting conversations so they can stay focused. It showed where the system was breaking down and what's causing the bottleneck. It brought to the surface that people were not putting a quality stamp to their work to say that it's fit for purpose and doesn't need a rework. The next guy just decided whether it needs a rework or not. And that slowed down the process.

The quality process was the bottleneck.

I took a couple of engineers, trained them so they were certified on quality assurance. We've leveled out the funnel which became the permanent fix.

I did not use any efficiency tools. I simply created a structure with them and for them that was unique to them. I respected their need for autonomy and their aversion for flavor of the month, and this is where I got the *Leverage*. As a result, I got them to follow me without resistance which is how I was able to *Lead*.

The only way to lead is to create other leaders. By giving them autonomy, they become empowered, and it makes them think it was their idea. They can't argue with themselves.

You can see that through the entire process, I used my *L to the Power of 3* strategy. I listened, I found a leverage, I motivated them to follow my lead without resistance.

Then came the Christmas party which I hosted.

The plant manager stood and said, "*We never thought you were going to be able to do this. We really didn't think that it was going to happen. But we've all come to the conclusion—we've met, we've talked, we've debriefed on what happened the last three months—we wanted to share to you what we think now,*" he said.

He gave me a gift coming from the whole team.



*“Open it,”* he said.

I unwrapped the gift and found a metal checkmark stuck inside the box.

*“We’ve decided that it’s your turn to tick the box,”* he said.

That was a happy ending which I deeply appreciated. People have recognized that the greatest part of the whole thing was, I had their best interests in mind. I had the company in mind, and I adapted to them. One way or the other, they have adapted to me as well.

I left the Switzerland company in a good place.

You will also find in my office: **There’s a tick in the box.**



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Execution is key.** You can have as many strategies as you like but without proper execution, it’s difficult to achieve a successful turnaround.
- **Use the strengths-based approach when developing people.** People are crucial in a turnaround. The best way to get them to perform at their optimum potential is to put them where their strengths lie. When people who play to their strengths are combined together, they create a high-performing team.
- **Be customer focused.** Customers drive the sales. When they’re satisfied with the solutions we provide, they do more business with us.
- **Respect people’s need for autonomy.** Do not tell them what to do but give them the structure by which they can perform their job according to your idea. If you don’t control them and let them think it’s their idea, they are more likely going to be willing to follow you.
- **What the primary message of this chapter?** Endure the adversities. If you are not successful at turning a business around, the ultimate casualties are the families who rely on their income from the company. If it gets tough, if you can’t get a buy-in, if people in the organization are

making it hard for you, think of the plight of those people who will lose their jobs. That will help you see your purpose in a different perspective. You are there to make an impact not only to the company but to the families of people within the organization.

## CHAPTER 5

# The Myth of Work-Life Balance



I wanted to be liked. *That's the most important.*

When I took on my first job as an Accounting Manager, I was more concerned about being liked. I had no qualms doing my job all day and all night. All day long, they're delegating tasks to me and I'd get them all done.

It was funny because I thought my school days were over, but my first big job turned out to be another year of university. I had to figure it all out. I had to do my job and also manage people.

Not long after I graduated university, I started studying at night after doing my job during the day. At a young age, I also got married with my first husband. I was going seven days a week studying and working and being a wife. I was tending the household doing all those things wives normally do like cooking and cleaning.

I wanted to leave my job because I couldn't split my body between my job, my CPA studies and my marital responsibilities. But being the breadwinner that I was, I needed to stick to my job to support my studies and keep the household running.

Right from the start, I set myself a Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG). How will I be able to make it with everything on my plate?

Well, I guess I ate more than what's on my plate. I meant it in a literal way. I started putting on weight. Just that year alone, I gained at least 10

pounds. It seemed inconsequential at the time. I was young, I had the energy of youth, I was unstoppable!

There's nothing that can stop me from reaching my Big Hairy Audacious Goal, i.e., to be a Controller at age 30.

At 26, I got my CPA.

HOORAY!

No more night studies, just a ticket to reach my BHAG. But life is full of surprises. After getting my CPA, I immediately got pregnant with my first child, my son, Arun.

At eight weeks, I almost lost him.

Everything that could go wrong in a pregnancy went wrong with me. I had a very serious abruption and my only prayer was for my child to be born healthy and safe.

When he was born, I wouldn't let anybody near him except my mother-in-law. We took turns taking care of Arun. She would look after him in the morning and I would take over at night. From studying to become a CPA to being a wife to being a mother, it felt as though I have been through one hundred years of sleepless nights.

I was a walking zombie.

With a career and a baby, you'd think I've got work all day. I was doing my job, I was spending time with my child, and I was cleaning the house. Where does sleep fit in?

I hardly slept. On top of my job as the Treasurer/Controller, I started teaching at a university and a college. At night, I was teaching four courses to McMaster University and two at Mohawk College. Four nights a week, I was putting my baby to bed, then off to teach at the university and the college and come home and do working papers for my day job.

It was insanity.

I decided to stop teaching and prayed for another child who came three years after my son. My daughter, Neeshali, was born.

Without the teaching jobs, I thought I would have more time so I started my MBA online at night. My routine was: I would do my day job, put the kids to bed at nine, do some house work, and work on my homework and papers for the MBA, all due at midnight. I pushed through with high energy, without backing down.

When I made the switch from finance and accounting to turning businesses around, I have been thrust into the global scene more times than I envisioned.

When I received my first big presidency, they transferred me to England, and I was constantly traveling between England, Sweden and Switzerland.

One of my most grueling experiences was in Switzerland on Christmas of 2010. You will remember this from Chapter 4 – The Turnaround, the *Tick the Box* story. I had taken on the job in June 2010 and was running both Sweden and Switzerland. We needed to hit the year's goals for the shareholders and it was crucial that the products were shipped before December 31<sup>st</sup>.

As you know, ticking the box put a solution to the problem and we were able to get the shipments out the door by December 31<sup>st</sup>. I told you how I fixed the problem, but I didn't tell you what went on with my personal affairs.

I wanted to be home for the holidays so badly but there was a problem. All the products had been booked for shipments by November, but they wanted me to see it through to make sure it all went as planned.

The divisional president offered a deal and said, "*We'll pay for your family to come celebrate Christmas with you here.*"

*“You’re talking about my son, my daughter, my husband, my sister, my niece, my mom and my dad. We’ve got a planned get together in Canada and I wouldn’t want them to change plans for me,”* I said.

*“Can I fly you back and forth?”* he asked. *“If you are not there, it won’t get done.”*

I knew how difficult it would be, but I said, *“Okay, I will do that,”* because a part of me wanted to get the job done and another part of me didn’t want to disappoint my family. I wanted to spend time with them because I had been away most of the time.

Switzerland celebrates Christmas on Christmas Eve, so they flew me home on the 24<sup>th</sup>, when the business was closed. I flew back evening of December 25<sup>th</sup> after I’ve had dinner with my family. I returned home on New Year’s Eve to go to the big party with my family and flew back to Switzerland on January 1<sup>st</sup> to get back to work.

We hit our goal. But I had to go through such an insane ordeal.

I often joked, *“One of these days, I’m going to turn around and bump into myself at the airport across time zones.”*

I felt like I was traveling through layers and it was all a blur.

The demands of business turnarounds go 24 hours, 365 days a year. You don’t get to pick what days you’re off. You’re NEVER off.

I tried to squeeze in a little family time. The only family vacation we had together was taking them on business trips with me. That’s as close to a family vacation as we could get.

I gave everybody a piece of me. I made sure that every day, I touched every part of my life. I reached out to my children, to my husband and to my mother. I spread myself too thin.

My wellbeing was hurt in the process. I became larger and larger and larger. I had been gaining 10-15 pounds a year. In the beginning, I didn’t mind how

my job has been affecting my health. My relatives from my mother's side were mostly in the heavier department. It somehow validated that gaining weight was just the natural direction I would go given my family history.

Along with gaining weight, I developed illnesses one on top of the other.

I had diabetes, sleep apnea and high cholesterol.

My doctor said, *"You can have a heart attack or stroke if you keep this up. I can't give you any more medication to stop this."*

*"What are you talking about?"* I asked.

*"You've got to figure this thing out,"* he said, *"We've got to lower your stress level."*

*"Stress level? I'm totally fine. I don't feel stressed at all,"* I said with confidence.

Even when he said, *"At one point, you've got to do something within the year, or you'll be dead,"* I remained adamant, because I work better under pressure.

I ignored all of his warnings until I got so sick while in Switzerland. I was taken to the hospital and stayed there for a week to figure out what was wrong with me. I developed rheumatoid arthritis where fluid built up in every joint of my body. I couldn't get out of bed. I couldn't lift my arms or walk on my feet. Everything hurt.

I went back to Canada and was advised to lose the weight before treating all the other symptoms. They saw my obesity as the primary reason of my health issues. We tried everything, every diet. Nothing worked. The doctor said I needed to undergo gastric bypass to lose weight. I was 270+ pounds. Imagine being obese in the healthiest part of the world where people mostly walk or go biking.

In Canada, it would've taken two years to get me through the wait list. We found a hospital in Stockholm, Sweden to get it done sooner and I was scheduled for surgery in the same year.

I dropped all the weight after the surgery. I went back to Canada and even my own son didn't recognize me.

Between then and my last corporate job doing business turnarounds, I have faced greater challenges and major setbacks as we have covered in the previous chapters, but I have done all of them being mindful of my health this time around. I started doing triathlons. Each year between 2014-2018, I joined the half Ironman and, as of this writing, I'm currently training for the full Ironman.

After I left Spirax, I built my own coaching company in 2017. I thought to myself, I'm done. It's now time to do what I want. Both kids are on their own. They have graduated college, their careers going. They were off the payroll in January of 2019 which means I'm not taking care of three households. I only have to think of ours.

A couple of years ago, I invested in a leadership circle certification which I implemented in my coaching company. I ask my clients to undergo a 360-feedback review to understand their leadership qualities and personalities, a value-added service instead of just pure advisory board. These are one-to-one sessions that last for a year.

However, I've only been hearing about them from their own perspectives. How can I bring more value and help them grow further?

Instead of doing just the one-on-ones where they share their personal insights to me, I proposed to them, *"I want to hear about you through the perspectives of others. Let's see how we can grow you."*

To start, I put myself out there first. Everybody gave me feedback. When my report came back, I rated myself 90% *in balance*. I am so in balance. I sleep in my bed, I eat in my house with my husband, I exercise and I'm the healthiest I've ever been.

My members rated me 10% *in balance*.

ARE. YOU. KIDDING. ME?



Oh well, they don't know. They have no idea what I used to do. I believe in my number. They don't know that this is the new definition of me.

Why do they have this perception?

I went back to them and asked, *"Can you help me understand your feedback? I'm sitting at 90% and you've got me at 10%. I want to understand why."*

*"You read five books a week, you do Ironman, you coach 36 CEOs. Maybe coach 10 CEOs, but you coach 36. Maybe run 5K, but Ironman? You do everything to the extremes. Who does that?"*

To them, I am unbalanced.

I went home and started saying to myself, *"How can I get around this and do I care? Do I care how I'm perceived?"*

I do. It's the first time in my whole life that I care. But I don't know why. I still can't explain it, but I care. How can I change this perception?

I curbed my language.

I stopped telling them when I'm running the races. They didn't need to know what I'm doing on one particular Saturday. If they asked, I simply said I worked out. I didn't need to tell them I did the half marathon. That helped for a while. Nobody asked anymore. I went on with my life feeling *in balance*.

Fast forward to April 2019. I had to take the leadership circle certification into leadership development certification. Instead of just knowing your percentile between creative leadership competencies and reactive tendencies, the goal is to focus on reducing the latter and increasing the former.

I looked in the mirror again and this whole balance thing came back to me. By the end of the four-day training program, I realized it's not balance.

Balance is a MYTH.

Balance is not about having the time to do everything and a lot of things. It's about doing the mission by which we are placed on earth. This mission has less to do with our roles or job titles but a lot about our *essence*—why are we here?

It's like how you associate sweetness with sugar. When you look at yourself, can you tell what's your essence as sweetness is to sugar?

That's when it hit me, *I don't know who I am.*

I've connected everything I've done with my accomplishments. I'm somebody's mom, I'm somebody's wife, I'm somebody's daughter, I'm a big company's president. When people ask me *who I am*, I go immediately to my kids and my career.

But who is the authentic me?

The day after I got back from the training program, I walked with a bottle of wine to the hairdresser. After I put it down on the table in front of her, I asked her, "*How are you feeling today?*"

*"I'm doing good,"* she said.

*"I'm cracking this thing open,"* I said, referring to the wine. "*How creative are you?*"

*"I'm good,"* she said. "*What are we doing?*"

*"I've been looking in the mirror for four days and I don't like how I look anymore. Get rid of the hair,"* I said.

I started over, starting with my hair.

To better understand myself, I started doing a couple of things. Every morning, I do a devotional where I write down the things I'm thankful for. Every night, I write in a separate journal all the things I'm thinking about in the moment, a scribble of random thoughts that are coming through. I reflect on how I felt when something happened, what it says about me,

why I reacted that way, and if it matters. I go deep inside me to know what caused such reaction and if I'm coming from a place of *woundedness*. It will not make sense to anybody, but the kids will get it twenty years after I'm dead.

What mattered to me during my 20s and 30s were accomplishments and career. I've always lived my life trying to get to the next rung. I just kept moving from one corporation to the next before I decided to take the big leap of building my own business. I became a controller at 26, four years earlier than my original plan of becoming one at 30. I was a CFO, a general manager, a president. It's all about titles without *inner* fulfillment.

Do I have regrets?

No.

Fulfillment comes in many forms. I gained fulfillment by helping the families that relied on the business I was turning around. I gained fulfillment by helping my parents and siblings live a better life than what we've found. I gained fulfillment from watching my children doing what they love and making accomplishments for themselves.

But I was lacking the real, deep, *inner* fulfillment that only comes from knowing my authentic self. When stripped of all the roles I assumed—a mother, wife, daughter, leader, friend—who is the real Lorraine?

*Who am I?*

I realize this needed more thought than I had believed. I can't come up with a word to define my essence. There are systems that can tell our innate strengths, our personalities, our competencies, our tolerance for change or our leadership styles, and they're highly useful in getting through life and performing our roles. But when it comes to knowing our true selves, it's not as easy as taking an online assessment or following some recommended methods from books. They are useful but most of the work will be coming from us, from the deepest part of our souls.

I'm still in the process of learning more about myself. At this point, I'm not in the best position to preach, I can only share some insights from my personal experiences. All I know is, I'm on my way. My coaching business is a great avenue for me to create impact to others who can then create impact to people around them, like a ripple in the water.

What I can easily give to you in the next chapter is how to achieve a semblance of balance in the midst of chaos. I call it artificial balance.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Listen to your body.** Make health a top priority even when pursuing a career, because we only have one body. If our health fails, we're down to nothing.
- **Listen to others' perspectives of you.** Listen to what people think about you as they might see something you don't. We all have blind sides. But only listen to people whom you truly trust and whose opinion you value.
- **Listen to your inner voice.** It's easy to get lost in the busyness of everyday life and the pursuit of goals. But inner fulfillment can only come from knowing your authentic self.

## CHAPTER 6

# Artificial Balance



Do our lives suddenly get in balance once you've discovered your true self? How do you achieve a life where you live your own truth while also balancing out the roles you have assumed?

That's tricky.

Before I tried to discover *who I am*, I never thought I was unbalanced. I've followed some methods which helped me achieve an artificial balance throughout my professional career and family life. One could argue, it's better to know your personal truth sooner than later. But that's not always the case for most of us. We are all in different stages of our journeys.

I realized that I didn't know my authentic self for the first half decade of my life. Is it too late? I suppose when it comes to enlightenment, it's better late than never.

And during the phases of our lives when we're trying to survive, we must do everything in our power to keep going, enlightened or not.

This goes back to why I say you've got to *Eat While You Dream*. I found a worthy ideal when I was young, to pursue a career in business. I built a life around my family and my career and somewhere along the way, I have been nudged to discover who I am, after all that I've been through.

Artificial balance kept me sane. Business turnarounds are consuming, mind numbing, but also fulfilling. I called it artificial balance for the very reason why I called balance a myth. Our career, our accomplishments, *they're not the most important*, but they have been integral in discovering who I am, once I started taking a look back.

Here are the five methods by which I was able to gain artificial balance during my career doing business turnarounds:

1. Delegate.
2. Create leaders.
3. Model the right behavior.
4. Build your emotional bank account.
5. Find something else to love.

## DELEGATE

Your primary responsibility as a senior leader is to spend your time strategizing and not doing tasks. You simply can't do it all which is why you need to delegate.

When putting the right person in the right seat, you need to *put your ego on the shelf*. Your ego can be your limiting factor when scaling up your business.

If you want to be the smartest person in the organization, your company's growth will be capped according to your capabilities.

Find people that are better than you in every place that you can find them. Don't hire beneath your skill. When you have the right person in the right seat, you can *let go*. You will succeed by virtue of their success because you will be able to focus on your area of strength rather than taking up what another person can do better.

How do you find the right person?

*Be clear about competencies.* What does it take to do the job?

Be clear about the qualities you need to fill the role. Do not focus on just knowledge and skills. Look for behaviors indicative of how they will fit in the role and the company's core values.

Look for people who possess grit and a growth mindset. Look for resiliency, intuitiveness, tenacity and good behavior. Skills are trainable but character and personality are difficult to change.

Look out for people who *say yes fast*, those who accept the job even though they don't know how to do it. They will have the initiative to figure it out. *Avoid those who say 'yes, but.'* These are people with a closed mind. They will hear what you have to say but will not agree with you because they'd rather stick to the status quo. A negative mindset is not beneficial to anybody and you don't want the 'yes, but' people to affect the whole organization.

Sometimes, you can spot people internally who have the competencies for a different role other than what they're doing. However, if a person spent ten years in Operations, people assume they'll never do Sales.

What they don't realize is that they may be doing sales every single day just by how they work with the Production staff and the customers. They might have a personality that people easily trust which is helpful in Sales.

If you allow them to expand their horizons, they will perform better and find more satisfaction in their jobs.

In the beginning of my career, I was accepting of everything that was delegated to me. I wanted to show people that I am willing to put in the hard work to reach my goals. I said yes fast many, many times.

From what we've covered in Chapter 4, The Turnaround, saying yes fast can help you advance in your career and it has fast tracked mine. However, as you go up the corporate rung, you will realize that saying yes too much will compromise your own productivity when you're a senior leader. You will realize that you simply can't do it all.

*Stop saying yes too much.*

Back off and pick a job where you can bring the most value. This situation resonates deeply with the 1974 study by Harvard Business Review called *Who's Got the Monkey?*

In this article, it was said that managers are typically running out of time while their subordinates are running out of work. This topic touches upon time, energy and people management.

You must *manage your time* to leave room for your own responsibilities. You must *manage your energy* so you are not left exhausted after accomplishing what your subordinates must do. You must not allow your subordinates to pass on the work to you simply because you are the one ultimately responsible for the accomplishment of the task.

In other words, you must *manage your people* and not let the monkey jump on your back if that monkey is another person's responsibility to care and feed.

The danger of giving too much can decline your quality. If you overextend yourself and don't do a good job everywhere or drop the ball, it will have an impact on trust and integrity.

The way I control my tendency to give too much is by keeping within the boundaries of my say-do ratio. If I say it, I'm going to do it. If I don't think I'll be able to do it, I need to have the courage to say that it's not going to happen.

Be realistic in delivering the result. If you say yes and don't do it, it will cost you more than having said no in the beginning. People will respect no in the beginning easier than not getting the job done.

Doing it ALL will overwhelm you and create unbalance which is why you must learn how to delegate.

## CREATE LEADERS

This method is closely linked to delegation. If you are able to create leaders, you gain the freedom to focus on your own job.



One of the best qualities of a great leader is the ability to make decisions on his or her own. By *teaching them to be autonomous*, they are able to keep the wheels running even in your absence as their superior.

Be careful though in seeing this distinction. People want autonomy but not all people take initiatives. The kind of autonomous leader that you want is one who's willing to take initiatives and do it on his own without being told.

Find these kinds of people and *teach them to work together*. As the company is growing, it's important to surround yourself with excellence. It doesn't stop there. You need to develop these people by ***putting them into mandated education***. They're the foundation that supports your business' growth.

Imagine your business as a building. It was built on a foundation for a two-story building, but it has grown into 20 stories high. Do you think the original foundation can support the whole structure?

You will need to go back and secure the foundation by putting layers upon layers of stronger materials to support the whole building the same way you need to keep developing your people, particularly the high-performing ones, to maintain the level of excellence that the growth requires.

Once you've trained your leaders, train them into ***passing on the knowledge to their peers and subordinate***. This part may be tricky because some people are fast learners and can perform their jobs really well but they're not good at passing on what they know, irrespective of their willingness.

This is also your responsibility.

When I was in Czech Republic, the CNC operators were having a hard time translating the Swedish tribal knowledge into process. They learned by doing so they didn't know how to teach the task to another person.

I had to bring the CNC operators from Sweden and they walked me through the whole process while they were doing their jobs. I made the training available online and split them into different modules pertaining to specific steps.

People come and go but the organizational knowledge is the company's property so they must be retained in a form that they can be transferred to different individuals in the event of attritions or internal movements.

When I have the luxury of time, I spot a person with high potential and find a project that I can give to that person. I usually take him off his previous task for six months and test him out. I don't make any promises, but it's helpful to know how far that person can go.

As a leader, you are responsible for creating other leaders, not for your own legacy but mainly for helping others succeed. As others succeed through and with you, you will create an organizational culture that's conducive for a better balance.

#### MODEL THE RIGHT BEHAVIOR

As a leader, people watch you and copy what you do. You don't only manage your own time, you should also help them manage theirs.

Some leaders will wait until everybody's gone before they leave, because they want to be the last one out the door. It's not a healthy thing because people are watching. You are giving an impression that you are expecting them to stay long after the office hours are over.

Other times, it's okay to extend hours to get things done, but it should not be the norm. You don't want to risk driving away people, especially your high performers.

When I do rounds within the plant at about 6 o'clock and there's nothing urgent for the day, I'll say, "*Hey guys, let's call it a day. I'm sure you've got better things to do. What is it that you're working on that can't wait for tomorrow?*"

If it's important that they stay, I'll go over and say, "*I'm going to get a bite to eat? What would you like me to bring back for you?*"

When I'm asking them to unbalance, I'd stay with them. I can't do the work with them, but I can support them. Just being present helps boost their morale and motivation.

## BUILD YOUR EMOTIONAL BANK

My son was graduating from the police foundations in Canada to become an officer and it was the most important day in his life. On the same day, I was scheduled to be in a board meeting in England. Those board meetings get planned eighteen months ahead of time. Getting the agenda changed would mean messing up the calendars of the other attendees who are all board members and senior executives.

What was I supposed to do?

I was upset that I was not able to go to my son's graduation because of the board meeting. I aired my sentiment to the CEO's assistant and said, *"If only I could swap with somebody this month and I'll do the next month."*

She made it happen!

The CEO gave me a call and said, *"You need to be with your son."*

She made it happen because she had his ear. I was indebted to her forever. I sent for her a big arrangement of fresh flowers as a token for the huge favor she had done for me.

It's important to treat people well and build relationships at work in such a way that they will pull some strings for you when you need help, and you will do the same if the situation is reversed.

My former Senior Vice President was a committed guy. He would jump off the 10<sup>th</sup> story if I thought that would help. In terms of symbiotic relationship, he has given me as much as I've given him.

However, he hardly took a break. He would cancel his vacation and not tell me. I told him to stop doing it. I wanted him to go on vacation and he didn't need to call in. If the company can't stand on its own without him for a week, we've got a bigger problem.

He's now working for a different client, but he remained one of the best colleagues I have worked with.

This still goes back to accepting that you can't do it all. We all need some help from others to help us get through our already busy lives.

## FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO LOVE

I always tell the CEOs I coach that it's important to find something else to love other than their job. If you're in a large company, you should have people in place that are responsible for execution while you're responsible for setting the vision.

I would tell them, *“Go play golf or sit in a coffee shop for an hour just enjoying your alone time or writing down your thoughts.”*

You can't be hiding in the office all the time and forget to live. If you keep doing this, you are modeling the wrong behavior to your people in the workplace. It's especially dangerous for people who got promoted internally because they're taking reference from what they see in you. They will think that hiding in the office will get them to where you are.

Being a runner, I get my ideas when I'm empty. Running is my form of meditation. As a visionary leader, it is important that I get away from both home and work to be alone with my own thoughts.

There is a scientific evidence to this.

According to Dr. Srini Pillay, author of *Tinker Dabble Doodle Try: Unlock the Power of the Unfocused Mind*, *“To unleash your true potential, you must unlock the power of your unfocused mind.”*

Harvard Business Review (HBR) further reviewed this concept by Pillay saying, *“Excessive focus exhausts the focus circuits in your brain. It can drain your energy and make you lose self-control. This energy drain can also make you more impulsive and less helpful. As a result, decisions are poorly thought-out, and you become less collaborative.”*

Furthermore, HBR states, *“When you unfocus, you engage a brain circuit called the ‘default mode network.’ Abbreviated as the DMN, we used to think of this circuit as the Do Mostly Nothing circuit because it only came on when you*

*stopped focusing effortfully. Yet, when ‘at rest,’ this circuit uses 20% of the body’s energy, compared to the comparatively small 5% that any effort will require.”*

Simply stated, our creative abilities are more strongly pumped up when we consciously distract ourselves with activities that can put our brains at rest. It could be meditating, taking a nap (especially powernaps), doing a sport, journaling or simply sitting alone in a quiet place.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **You can’t do it all.** Achieving artificial balance takes a village. Learn how to delegate, get some help and create other leaders.
- **Balance is not consistent.** Balance, in itself, is a myth. But we can be in a place where we feel we are in balance on some, but unbalanced on other days. It means there are days when we need to put in extra work to get things done. Maybe it’s your day to go to the gym but a shipment needs to go out. For that day, it might be okay to skip the gym and do it another day in order to do what needs to be done.
- **Unfocus to focus.** To harness your creative juices, distract yourself intentionally. Do something outside of home and work that’s only for you. Meditate, work out, write in a journal, get a massage—any personal activity that you will enjoy when alone.



## CHAPTER 7

# The Most Important



When my daughter, Neeshali, was two, it was the first time ever that I had to travel and leave her. I gave her a little pink teddy bear and told her, *“Mommy’s going to be gone for a little while. When you feel like you want to give Mommy a hug, you hug the bear and know that Mommy is hugging you back.”*

That was 1997, before there was Skype and other messaging apps we use today.

When we got on the phone before her bedtime, she would tell me, *“I’m going to bed now, Mom. I’m hugging my bear.”*

I was back and forth commuting every two weeks between England and Canada. Once I went to her parent-teacher night and she told me her teachers would ask her, *“Don’t you miss your mom?”*

I have wondered, would they say that if her Dad was gone for two weeks?

If their Dad was gone for two weeks, it’s all okay, he’s coming back. But when their Mom’s gone for two weeks, it’s a different story. There was a stereotypical expectation that mothers are at home.

My daughter always told her teachers: *“I see my Mom every day. My friends don’t get to see their mom every day, but I see my Mom everyday online.”*

Everything I do, I do for my kids. But I have received more backlash for pursuing a career as a mother. It didn't bother me but on a personal level, I often asked myself if I was doing the right thing for my kids. I was not alone in this matter as most mothers I've talked to have felt the same worry.

If you ask me why I have the propensity for gaining accomplishments, I could give a convenient answer.

I know hard work. That's how life has been introduced to me. I've been exposed to it since I was a child having been raised on a farm. When I started working, I was showing people that there's no problem too big that I cannot solve. I'll roll up my sleeves and do whatever needs to be done.

As years went by, I realized that that wasn't the whole truth. It may have influenced how I am today but there was more to my desire to accomplish than just knowing hard work.

*All along, I was chasing love.*

My parents split up when I was four years old. I lived with my dad and for a year, his partner was physically abusing me. She would strap me and have me stand in the corner with a plate on my head. When the plate broke, I'd get beaten up again. Even if I was sick, I'd be expected to do the cleaning which made me sicker.

My mother came to visit, and she saw the welt marks on my back when she was changing me for bed. She took me out of my dad's home to live with my grandmother in Newfoundland.

When I became a teenager, I moved to Ontario with my dad and his partner. It didn't sound like a good move, but I was hoping for a roof over my head while I studied at Brock University in St. Catharine's. His partner tried to hit me again. She raised her hand to slap me across my face, but I grabbed her hand and said, *"I'm not a little kid anymore. You hit me and I will hit you back."*



Since that day, she never touched me again.

But my dad and I could not get along. I was supposed to use the money I had saved during the summer for my tuition, but I ended up getting a student loan. I had to use the money instead to get a place of my own.

I had a strained relationship with my dad since I was young. But it's not until I was forty years old that I figured out, I had been trying to get him to love me all along.

I wanted my father to love me so I was doing everything.

*"I earned a degree, Dad. Do you love me now?"*

*"I'm now an accountant, Dad. Do you love me now?"*

He left my mother for another woman who was an accountant. I had no love for accounting. But I did it because I thought if I became an accountant, he would start loving me. I was always grasping for his validation. I was always craving for his love.

I have been wounded for many, many years and my busy life created a band-aid that only covered my wound but never truly healed it.

As the experience had been embedded in me since I was a child, I didn't know what I was dealing with. I went for accomplishment after accomplishment because deep inside me, I wanted the validation that my father never gave me. If I were accomplished enough, if I gave more, then I would deserve to be loved.

Later in life, I realized that I've always been thinking of what I can do for the person next to me. I was always after what I can give to my father, my mother, my sister, my husband, my kids, the company. I always think of what I can give to other people. And it's not a bad thing. Helping others, looking after my family, gives me immense happiness. But I forgot to give more to myself.

My career has given me the life I am enjoying today but my true self was lost in the process. If I had listened a little bit more intently to what the voice inside me was saying, I would have heard that it's only telling me to do things because that's what I want and not because I had to do it for other people.

But life has a way to bring us back to the path which we must take. The fulfillment I get from my coaching business is more personal and my impact is more extensive without losing who I am.

When Neeshali was 12, she wrote an essay that was posted at the back of her classroom.

*"I think the person I look up to is my mom because she travels a lot and can still keep in touch. Once when she was in England, we were on Skype. She told me to move away from the webcam and to show her my room. Now, obviously, it was messy, so she told me to clean it. She watched me clean it up.*

*She also has a very busy job and keeps the house in order. But if it wasn't for Roger, she would probably go berserk.*

*I hope to be like her when I grow up. She has been a big influence on my life. The characteristics of hers I wish and I hope I may have someday are the hard work she puts into everything, the patience she has, and to be so nice and kind even when she's mad.*

*There's not much of my life but there is still more to come, I'm only 12. But I live everyday as my last. I hope I can exactly be like my mom when I grow up."*

I am dragging it everywhere I go. For a woman who's always away and stretching herself to balance her career and family life, that was a reinforcement and it keeps me grounded.

It's not a validation to address what I didn't get from my father as a child. It's a gift that I am receiving in its raw form. It didn't have to come with it a plaque of recognition. It's enough to know, as imperfect as I am, that I was able to impart a positive impact to my own children, to grow up without the wounds that drove most of my life.

Fast forward to 2009, I was on Skype with Neeshali. She was turning fifteen at the time. I started crying and crying and crying and I said to her, *“I miss you so much. I need a hug so bad. My heart is aching. I can’t reach through the screen and hug you.”*

She said, *“Mom, did you bring the box?”*

*“What box?”*

*“There’s a box there, go get it.”*

I found the box and inside there was a bear for me holding a big heart with the words *“I love you.”* In the card there was a note that says, *“When you feel like giving me a hug, hug the bear and know that I am hugging you back.”*

To openly *receive* love and to know that I deserve it, *that’s the most important.*



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Know your history.** When people are not aware, most of their life’s decisions and reaction to things around them are rooted from the situations they have been exposed to at a very young age. If it has caused any wound, it’s important to be aware of it in order to deal with it constructively.
- **Learn to put yourself first.** Certain circumstances will make you forget about your own needs to help the whole village survive, but it will catch up to you at some point. Learn to slow down and address your own needs. That way, you can be better able to help others.
- **What’s the primary message of this job?** Be open to receive love and know that you deserve it, not because of what you give, not because of your title, but just because.



# Conclusion



*What can I do today to move my goals forward?*

That's the question I always ask myself.

*Eat While You Dream* brings us back to one of the basic truths of life—to be present.

Nothing big is ever achieved if we don't put in the work today to reach our goals. As we define our goals, we do whatever we need to do today to move that goal forward. You need hard work, resilience, leadership, courage, strength and faith to make it happen, but most of all, you must work on it *deliberately*.

It must be intentional, not just consequential.

You must be present.

When turning businesses around, being present means intentionally executing the job because you know it will lead to the fulfillment of the goal. It means getting back up after a setback if you know that giving up will result to the abandonment of the goal. It means accepting but not tolerating the differences in culture, leadership styles and genders to be able work on a common objective.

Let's go back to my earlier example about driving. The car will not move forward unless you start driving. Let's suppose your gas is running low, will

you just abandon your journey, or will you look for the nearest gas station to fuel up? If the road is not paved and that's the only route to go, will you drive fast and risk a flat tire, or will you carefully drive slowly, so the rocks wouldn't break down your tires.

Being present is accepting that even with a clear vision of your goals or destination, you only have *now* to do something.

In the midst of my multi-tasking world, I also learned that inner balance can be achieved when I'm giving my full attention to the person I am with. When I'm with my kids, I devote uninterrupted time with and focus all of my attention to them.

Finally, while there are many things that take up our attention, we must not forget the one person who needs it the most, ourselves.

One way or the other, life has a way to remind us of who we really are. It's a more difficult process, much more difficult than transforming businesses because you don't just follow a set of rules, you must awaken that which is sleeping inside of you, and only you can do it.

My journey is far from over, so I do my best to listen to my own voice and *pay attention* to what's in front of me as I follow a worthy ideal.

If, in the future, you look back and remember how this book helped you get closer to your dreams, if it has given you a stronger motivation to rise from a setback, and if I may have imparted wisdom, I hope that you do the same act of paying it forward by sharing it to others and helping them in their own journeys.

I am deeply grateful for the time you have invested in reading my story. I hope you have been inspired to undertake bigger challenges. You can. *Eat While You Dream.*