

EXCERPT



HOW GREAT LEADERS BUILD
UNSTOPPABLE TEAMS

ALL IN

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INTRODUCTION

As first days go, Alexander Vasiliev's was among the very worst. By the end of his shift working as a security guard at the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Center in Yekaterinburg, Russia, he had cost his employer more than \$3,000, faced criminal charges, and made the international news—and all it took to wreak so much havoc was a pen. Bored, Vasiliev drew two pairs of eyes on the blank faces in Anna Leporskaya's avant-garde masterpiece *Three Figures*. The painting was valued at nearly \$1 million and on loan from the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. Vasiliev was fired, along with the security firm, and they ended up paying for the painting's restoration.

When asked about his little doodle, er, act of vandalism, Vasiliev said he didn't know the paintings were valuable, he didn't like them, and, oh yeah, some schoolgirls egged him on to draw on the faces. Sure, dude.

More than five thousand miles away, Ben Bjork, a security guard at the Baltimore Museum of Art, had a very different job experience.

For years, he'd stared at *50 Dozen* by artist Jeremy Alden, a chair made out of six hundred No. 2 pencils. Bjork had fantasized about sitting in the chair, but he never made a move to do so, because he knew he couldn't. He and his fellow guards had a deep respect for the art.

Then museum board member Amy Elias came up with the idea to invite the guards to curate their own exhibition, "Guarding the Art." Over the yearslong preparation, the security sentinels made all the decisions about the show, from which pieces would be on display to the color of the paint on the walls. As they gained a better understanding of the process, they learned about the need for art to work harmoniously and fluidly; they also came to better understand their role at the museum. Now they have a different view of their relationship to the art.

Traci Archable-Frederick, a security guard who chose the contemporary collage piece *Resist #2* by Mickalene Thomas, said, "I'm very proud of this piece, as if I did it myself." As for Bjork, he chose the chair he'd been thinking about for so long. He had always protected the piece, and now he wanted to celebrate it. In his label copy, he stated: "I chose *50 Dozen* in part because it's funny for me to think of a chair that would break if you actually sat on it, like it's a prank on the tired guards."

As business leaders, we search high and low for employees who give more, do more, and want more, like the security guards at the Baltimore Museum of Art, and yet we more commonly end up with people who take a Sharpie to our priceless masterpiece—if we can find any candidates at all. And because we don't have a solid team, we spend way too much time and money trying to find better people and keep the employees we *do* have. If we're lucky, we have a couple awesome people on staff, yet their work is compromised because their coworkers don't pull their weight.

Throw in disruption—a global health emergency, generational divide, shifting work standards and policies—and staffing your company, much less building a team that rocks it every day, is a relentless struggle. It seems as though most days are like managing unruly adolescents, and as soon as you get a handle on them, someone mucks it all up again for the team. All this volatility is hard enough on corporations; for small businesses, it can be devastating.

Since I wrote my first book in 2008, I have devoted myself to helping entrepreneurs like me, the people who started their businesses and ran them. Then the call came from one of those megacorporations: Guardian Insurance. Maria Ferrante-Schepis was tasked with figuring out how to build a sales team who adored their clients, cared for the company, and were all in on their job. Yes, Guardian had done years of research and found some interesting stuff. But it was big corporate stuff. What this HR leader wanted was the secret that successful small businesses—like mine, and those of so many entrepreneurs I had gotten to know—had figured out. Huh. A big company wants to know how *we* do it? At first I was surprised, but then I realized their interest made sense.

Small businesses don't offer employees huge ladders to climb. The work is not steady. Micro-enterprises can rarely win a compensation offer battle. And we can't hide hiring mistakes with "fill-in-the-blank" positions. We are underfunded and underresourced, and yet many entrepreneurs pull it off. Some small companies are stacked with "A-players," yet the reason why is not so obvious.

I thought about my colleagues and other small-business owners who have remarkable, loyal, and motivated teams. They don't have employees who kill time until they can clock out or do the bare minimum until they can find a "better" job. They have rock-star employees who can do the job they were hired to do, who love their work,

and who seek ways to contribute and solve problems. Employees who are all in, who care as much about the companies they work for as the owners do.

Stop for a moment and consider that possibility. What could you do if you had a team that cared as much about your company—its mission, customers, growth, *future*—as you do? The truth is, it's not a pipe dream. It's a necessity. You can't drive profitability, manage disruption, or scale your company if your team doesn't care about your business.

When I scratched out my first business plan at the tender-and-clueless age of twenty-three, I couldn't have imagined a team like that. Heck, I didn't even know I needed one. I figured I'd hire people who were qualified to do the work, they'd show up, and we'd all do our best to deliver good service to our customers. Wrong! Cue the annoying game show buzzer. To find and keep great employees, I tried all the (wrong) things, and then more (wrong) things, and then I invented some wacky things and tried them too. But I kept coming back to the same challenges. Regardless of my efforts, I felt paralyzed, disheartened, and helpless. Recruiting people, retaining people, let alone "raising the bar," was a constant life of frustration and feeling overwhelmed.

Having a team that cares as much about our company as we do seems unobtainable, doesn't it? And it sounds like a myth, as difficult as finding the Holy Grail. The great news is, it's not.

I used to believe that 10 percent of the population (or some other small rando number) were great workers and everyone else sucked. That all the good people were already employed, and that anyone seeking a job wasn't employed because they weren't employable. I thought I was an A-player and no one else could measure up.

After years of struggling to build a team that could not only han-

dle the work but could help grow my company, I started to think differently about my role in that struggle. I had always thought of myself as an entrepreneur. I applied business strategy to get more top clients, to achieve and maintain profitability, to refine my business so that it would run without me, and to market my business in a way that got my ideal prospects' attention. And yet when I tried to apply "business strategy" to team building, it would always crumble. I tried to build a better team by building a better business, when in reality I needed to become a better leader. Not just a decent leader, or even a good leader. A *great* leader.

If I wanted my employees to be all in, I needed to be all in on my employees. Let me repeat that with a slight rephrase, since repetition is the mother of mastery:

If *you* want *your* employees to be all in, *you* need to be all in on *your* employees.

And that's what I did. I went all in. More specifically, I learned how to go all in and then practiced it. I figured out that everyone feels like an A-player—me, you, all of us. And the truth I discovered is we are *all* A-players. Yes, everyone is an A-player. Some are just A-players in waiting. That's called potential.

Through trial, error, and a whole lot of humble pie, I identified a formula that would create the right conditions to find and nurture that potential. I trusted the process, stuck with it, and now I have a team packed with top performers. Business leaders now come to take a tour of our tiny, eight-person office, meet the team, and see how we do it. And the thing is, we just do the best of what you don't see at most other companies. We took ideas from sports teams, universities, religious practices, and, most important, psychological/behavioral research. And voilà, our team is curating art—not a single Sharpie face in the place.

I made it my mission to study the companies that had figured out how to build remarkable teams. In my research, and in interviewing, arguably interrogating, business leaders who did it right, I hoped to find the missing link, the one key difference they all applied to their organizations. Instead, I found four. And those four strategies became a leadership formula I applied to my own companies. And it worked.

I have tried to learn from great leaders, and I have implemented their ideas—sometimes clumsily. I am far from perfect, but I have found that even implementing bits and pieces has had a significant positive impact on our company. Our team continues to surprise and delight me as we work together to grow our organization.

You don't have to amplify your leadership abilities by 100 percent tomorrow—or ever. You don't have to be perfect as you try to implement new ideas. And you don't need to do all that you learn here. All that matters is you get started and commit to continuous improvement.

You can lead an extraordinary team that is all in for your company. In fact, it will happen because you are all in for them.

Why Most Teams Just Don't Care

There's busted. And then there's *busted*.

On paper, Elliott seemed like the one. We needed a solid computer tech and he seemed to have all the right credentials. He was proficient in the right hardware and software. He had years of experience doing the same thing we did. I didn't notice one single typo on his résumé, a clear demonstration of his attention to detail. And a bonus—he was fluent in Spanish!

His interview went well. He was articulate and likable. His suit fit and his tie complemented his shirt, which is a small miracle for a computer guy. Even though I had only met with three candidates at that point, I hired him on the spot. It wasn't that I had necessarily hit the jackpot with Elliott. I chose not to interview anyone else because he checked all our boxes—and I was already overwhelmed. Wasting time interviewing more folks would be costly and draining. I needed someone pronto, as in yesterday.

My business partner and I couldn't handle the workload anymore. We had started our company, Olmec Systems, to provide tech support to local businesses, and as we grew, we both kept doing the client work we'd always done. By the time we posted the job announcement for a tech, we were beyond exhausted. We felt paralyzed and helpless. Helpless to find the help we needed. Isn't that frustrating? When you need help the most, you have the least amount of time and energy to make it happen.

Those days, I dragged myself home from work, long after my kids went to bed, and then got up early to do it all over again. Every Monday I told myself, *If I can just get past this week, I'll have the time to find and develop the right person.* But it never happened.

We needed our clones, or as close to clones as we could get. Someone who had a pulse, could type at a keyboard and plug in a few wires. The other two candidates we interviewed were questionable on the pulse part. So a guy with the experience we were looking for, who wore a fitted suit and had a résumé on heavy-stock paper, was nothing short of a godsend.

On his first day on the job, I immediately sent Elliott out into the field to support our clients—with no substantial training. Clearing my throat here—when I say he received “no substantial training,” I really mean he got none. Squat. Zilch-ola. No meeting. No “get to know you” chat. No there's the bathroom, there's your desk, feel free to walk around. When Elliott showed up on the morning of day one, I gave him the addresses of clients to visit, problems to fix, and pushed him out the door—literally.

We had clients who urgently needed services that day, and when Elliott turned back to ask, “What should I . . . ?” I put my hand on his shoulder as if to say, “You've got this,” and gave him a gentle shove (aka, a hard-ish push) out the door. As he walked toward his

car carrying the tech tool kit I gave him, I cried out after him, "Call me if you need me."

Yeah, sending him right out into the field was another hasty move, but I didn't have the time to train him. We needed him to pay for himself starting from day one. Plus, that's how I started my first job. Trial by fire! On-the-job learning! If it's on your résumé, you can do it.

Within hours, Elliott started calling with questions. "How do I do this?" and "How do I configure that?" and "Why won't this thing work with that thing?" And my favorite question (as in my least favorite of all time): "Hey, this client only speaks Spanish. How do I ask them where the bathroom is?" Didn't the résumé specify he was fluent in Span . . . ugh, forget it.

The person we hired to help us manage our client load couldn't handle anything on his own. Instead of freeing up our time, he put more of a burden on me and my partner. I couldn't do the tech work I needed to do when I was talking Elliott through his. But wasted time was the least of our problems. He quickly formed the infamous reverse "golden handcuffs."

As he became familiar with our clients and their systems, Elliott started to learn elements of their technology that only he could support. He set up computers his own way, not ours. I wasn't aware of how he configured certain technology and (sinfully) didn't know some of the passwords he set. Within a month, Elliott didn't feel that he had to stay with our company; I felt *I* needed *him* to stay.

Elliott had tied my hands behind my back and the handcuffs were locked. He had the golden key. I was at *his* whim. If one of our clients had a problem, I was required to have Elliott do the work. Talk about leverage. I couldn't fire Elliott, he could "fire" me, the leader, and leave me in the lurch trying to figure out how he supported our clients.

Even though he seemed incapable of doing much of the work and uninterested in taking direction from me, his boss, he had become indispensable. He knew stuff I didn't, so firing him would screw up client relationships and exhaust me further. I was frozen in frustration.

Then Elliott said, "We need to talk compensation. People at my level get paid double what I make. I feel I'm getting shortchanged, Mike. I don't feel good about that and suspect you don't either. I hope you will fix that for me before I'm needed to save a client from a network disaster." OMG. Seriously? Was my employee shaking me down?

I started to think, *Maybe if I pay him more, he'll be more motivated. He'll listen to me. He'll do better.* That moment introduced me to the weirdest employment vortex I have ever experienced. The exact guy I wanted to fire so badly was the exact guy I was trying to figure out how to pay more. Maybe if I took the few dollars I had been allocating as a salary for myself and gave it to Elliott, it would convince him to stay, and stay happy. (I made \$17,000 in my third year of owning a company in 1998. In today's dollars that's *negative* \$500.)

It wasn't so much that Elliott was shaking me down. I was shaking myself down. In the hopes of converting him from a bad employee to a good one, I wanted to pay a guy who sucked at his job *more money*. I held on to a not-working-out worker because I was terrified of the hiring process that clearly didn't work. The thought of the effort needed for training and retaining made it worse. And now I planned to forgo the few dollars I took home to pay an employee who had all the power.

Maybe I could work with him to improve his job performance.

Maybe I could come up with a way to motivate him to be more invested in our company's success.

Maybe unicorns would fly down from Mars and sprinkle him with magic “caring” glitter, so he’d suddenly start doting on our clients instead of on himself.

In mid-December, about three months into his employment, all my “maybes” were answered with a clear “F no.” Elliott left a voice-mail for me with some sad news. “My grandmother passed away yesterday, unexpectedly. My family and I are devastated. I have to go to Georgia for her funeral this Friday. I will be gone for a week.”

Elliott seemed dismayed about losing his grandmother, and yet something seemed fishy. First, his voice sounded funny, as though he had cupped his hand over the receiver to block out surrounding party noise. And he left me the muffled message at 1 a.m. on a Saturday. And, *and*, I could hear the infectious beat of “Jump” by Kris Kross cranking in the background. Not the typical mournful music played when a loved one passes. We all grieve in our own way, but with wiggida wiggida wack hip-hop?

Despite my apprehension, I would never deny an employee time off to go to a funeral, so I left him a return message offering my condolences and gave him a week off—paid, of course. Then I immediately went to work covering our clients, with one-third of our staff out of commission.

That’s when the Bahama Mama hit the fan.

About midweek, one of our clients left me a voicemail. “Oh my gosh. You’re the best boss ever,” he said. “I ran into Elliott in the Bahamas. It’s so amazing that you gave him a week off to be at The Buzz 99.3 FM party.”

Say what now?

Elliott had been kicking it at some sort of weeklong party on a Caribbean island while we picked up his slack—and paid for his vacation?

And wait. Just. One. Second. He *might* not be partying the blues away. *Maaaaaybeeeee* his grandma's death was a story. As in the made-up kind.

I started my business as an entrepreneur, but after hiring my first employee I was now a career sleuth in training. Since I wasn't 100 percent sure our client had the right guy, I sent a bouquet of lilies to Elliott's parents with a note that read "I'm so sorry about the passing of your mother. Elliott told me how much she meant to your family."

That's when everything blew up. Confused by the note, Elliott's parents called him, and us. Grandma was alive and well after all. (I'll bet you figured that out way before I did.) Turns out Elliott had won a contest on the radio for a party in the Bahamas that prior Saturday (I assume around 1 a.m., but what do I know?), and he'd used his meemaw as an excuse to get paid time off.

Elliott was *busted*. Not just regular busted. You-fake-killed-off-your-grandma type of busted.

His parents were furious (I hope). I was furious (for sure). And Elliott? He was out of a job. (Most definitely.)

If he had just come to me and said he won the tickets, I would have accommodated him. I would have said, "A weeklong party on an island, for free? Heck yeah! Go forth! Remember to hydrate." Instead, he defaulted to manipulation to get his way. Which I only later realized was his *modus operandi*.

The fallout after firing Elliott was tough. I had to explain to the clients he served why he had been let go, and then fix all the problems and inconsistencies he'd created. After four months, we were right back where we started—exhausted and doing all the work. Actually, it was worse. We lost trust with some of our clients. Elliott had left their systems in a lurch, and we didn't even have the @\$%@!

passwords. We didn't hire an employee who was all in and now we had a handful of clients who were all gone.

According to Trakstar, "bad hires" cost companies thousands of dollars, but you didn't need anyone to tell you that. You might be surprised to learn that according to a Harris Interactive Poll, 41 percent of business owners said bad hires cost them more than \$25,000. I hope that *is* a surprise to you. And I surely hope you are not thinking, "I wish it was *only* \$25K." Beyond the recruitment and hiring expense, there's the cost of unproductive time, unhappy or lost clients, disruption to others. When an employee doesn't fit, it can undermine morale and the performance of the entire team. And the bossy boss, you, loses sleep as a bonus.

Long after I fired Elliott, I kept frothing about the locked accounts, the fake-dead grandma, all that stuff. I ranted to anyone who would listen to me. When I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror after a particularly animated diatribe, my face red and spittle at the corners of my mouth, I made a solemn pledge: *No more bad hires.*

THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DARTBOARD

Over time, I learned how to hire more patiently. And I found some good people who really cared. But I still struggled to keep all my employees engaged, and to build a team where everyone cared as much as I did.

Five years later, I sold my interest in Olmec in a private equity deal and went on to cofound a computer forensic investigation business. As I grew as a leader, I knew the essence of a successful company was an extraordinary team. I'm convinced you know the same. But knowing and doing are two different things. And as much as I

wanted an unstoppable team packed with rock-star employees, I struggled.

I now consider my second company a Petri dish for team building. It was as if I was tossing darts at a “strategies for employee engagement” dartboard and trying whichever one my mini arrow hit. And when it didn’t work as well as I hoped, or not at all, I picked up my darts and gave it another go. I tried paying more money and increasing benefits. I tried shorter workdays and flex time. Longer workdays with shorter workweeks. I tried creating a company culture and set of corporate values. I put motivational quotes on the walls. I tried team-building exercises and employee recognition. I tried rallying my troops around one big goal—and around defeating one common enemy. I even tried bringing in the cheesy foosball table.

Some of the strategies I tried “worked,” but they were only temporary solutions. And even when I had one or two superstar employees, the rest of the team seemed disengaged. I wanted an entire team of performers. I wanted a team that cared as much as I did, and I started to believe it wasn’t possible. After all, I’m an entrepreneur. I built the business. I am the shareholder. I reap the rewards when we win: the money goes to me, the accolades go to me, the ego is all mine. Who is going to care about the business as much as me?

IT’S NOT YOU, IT’S ME

We were in the right place at the right time. Our forensics company became an industry authority, but the engine fueling that company—my team—was fragile. We had three rock-star employees and the other folks all seemed to fall a bit short here and there. Just when we started to fracture, we sold the company to Robert Half International.

Unlike my last exit, this time I would stay on with the company for a year. I had no clue what was expected of me or what my role was. Simply that I was to do—something.

Now I wasn't the boss. I was the employee.

The first official day of the acquisition I reported to our existing building as instructed. No one from Robert Half was there. No one contacted us. No one called. No one stopped by. No one acknowledged our existence. I was pushed out the door of my old business and into the job at a new one, with the expectation to get stuff done. But I had no clue what to do. The only thing I got was an email from the new boss saying, "Call me if you need anything." Just one cryptic email. No instructions. No training. No nothing.

A few hours later, I called in to the main office to try to figure out what to do (my new "boss" neglected to include his number in his email). I got hold of no one. Crickets. Everyone remembers their first day of work, and mine was the deafening sound of silence.

That evening, my wife, Krista, asked, "How'd your first day go, Mr. Corporate Guy?" She was excited that I was finally off the entrepreneurial hamster wheel and had a "real" and "reliable" job.

"I don't know," I said. "Like, I just sat there. I didn't know what to do and no one directed me. No one even talked to me. If I had to put my feeling of today in one word, it would be *abandoned*."

Abandoned. It was my first day, and I felt discarded by the company I intended to devote myself to. I started that first day at 8 a.m. ready to roll, and by the time I was talking with my wife at 8 p.m. that night, I was ready to resign. Twelve measly hours.

Within a few weeks, Robert Half started shifting some of the former team into different roles—roles that didn't make sense. For example, they moved Maryellen, who managed forensic investigations, to a (much) lesser position: data entry. They never interviewed

her; they never asked about her; they just said, “This is what you do now.” Her job was to fill in the blank.

Maryellen started coming in to work with tears pouring down her face. “I hate it here,” she’d say. “They’re destroying me. I don’t know what to do. I need a job, but I can’t do this.”

I wanted to help Maryellen and the others who suddenly found themselves stuck in roles that didn’t make sense or were following protocols they didn’t understand. The boss at Robert Half shuffled our people around to fill in the next open spot. And me? I had no authority. I was just told to work.

My new boss, John (or was it Frank, or Ken?), gave me zero direction, except a billable-hours metric that I couldn’t fulfill because I *had no direction*. With no communication, no guidance, and no sense of control, I quickly disconnected from the business, and from my former team. No one talked about “quiet quitting” at that time, but that term fits how I felt—and behaved. Robert Half went through twelve months of due diligence to acquire our company, and within twelve hours they had lost my heart.

Mistakes were made. Project conflicts became the norm. And my formerly thriving business started to collapse. Projected to do \$7 million the year we were acquired, we pulled in a dismal \$300,000. This is when leadership at Robert Half started to freak out.

John called me into his office. “Mike,” he said, “we need you to fix this. We now understand from your team that you oversaw the operations. You’re in the wrong position here. You really should be a director.”

I scoffed. I’m not proud of it, but I did. I had owned a sizable portion of the company they just acquired, and yet they had never interviewed me about what I do, so they had no idea I handled the

day-to-day operations. Now that everything was screwed up, they wanted me to step in and fix it.

I declined the offer and went back to my “job,” which I deemed should now include speaking to aspiring entrepreneurs about building and selling companies, and the pitfalls that can ensue.

Months later, I was fired.

John called me to the conference room this time. The ominous one, right next to the HR office. There he sat at the head of the table, with the HR person to his right and someone whom I presume was another one of my “bosses” at his left. Corporate rule #1: Cover your ass. One firing = two witnesses.

John is a good person. You could just feel that about him. But the stress of the corporate machine was crushing him too. So his emotions got the better of him, and he screamed. His face went beet red. He yelled at me and my failure to deliver for the company. He cursed and pointed at me. “Why don’t you do anything? How can you bring so many credentials and be so useless? How come you are speaking to aspiring entrepreneurs on the company’s dime?”

The veins on his temple pulsed with uncontrollable anger. He was a man at his wit’s end. And yet all I could think was, *This guy’s a dick.*

I stared at the spittle forming at the corner of his frothing mouth, and I remembered my own steaming-mad red face in the mirror after one of my Bahama Elliott rants. Right then, the truth slapped me in the face:

John isn’t a dick. Nor is Elliott.

I am.

I am the dick.

And now I was busted.

All these years, I thought Elliott was the problem, when it was really my lack of leadership. I barely interviewed him. I never trained him. I threw him into the field without so much as a welcome lunch, let alone a potty break. I avoided his calls on day one, and two, and every day after.

I never got to know him, I didn't make time to listen to his ideas, and I didn't create a work environment where he felt comfortable sharing awesome news, like winning an awesome trip. I never considered his potential nor tried to develop it. I expected him to serve my company and could care less about serving him. I treated him like a resource, like a friggin' human resource, not a human being.

Would Elliott have worked out had I done all those things right? Maybe. Maybe not. But I could no longer deny my part in the problem.

On Elliott's first day home from working with me, a loved one surely asked him, "How was your first day?" And I can only suspect he responded like I did on my first day. "Meh" at best. "Abandoned" at worst.

Now, on the other side of poor leadership, I realized that if I wanted a top-performing team, I was the one who needed to change. I needed to learn the tools of great leadership.

As I walked out through the revolving door onto the sidewalk of Avenue of the Americas in New York City, I felt extraordinary relief and enlightenment. Right then and there, I knew I would start a new company with a new *me*, and it felt so good. And this time would be different. In that moment, I vowed to become the greatest leader I could be. To lead a team of employees who loved coming to work, who were strengthened and energized by their job, and who felt encouraged to be themselves and contribute to the company in their own unique ways because they knew their leaders deeply cared for them. From that day forward, I would go all in for my team. And

this time, I would have an entire team that would go all in for the company.

WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN TO BE ALL IN?

You may be thinking, “Mike, I *do* care about my employees. I *am* all in for them.” I know you care, or you wouldn’t have picked up this book. The challenge for us as leaders is that we have a different perspective about work, and our company, than do our employees. And until we understand this fundamental difference, no amount of caring will create the team we want.

According to the Pew Research Center, more than half the people who work for a private company say that their job is simply what they do for a living. Yet nearly two-thirds of business owners and leaders say their job gives them an identity. This is a massive gap.

I have a theory about why the gap is so big. Think about it—as a business leader, you have unlimited potential and possibilities. You can follow your desires. You can become the person you want to be because *you* are in control. I know it may not feel that way when you’re working your ass off on a Saturday, or when you seem to be at the mercy of your deadlines, or your customers, or society. Despite how you may feel, you have more control over your future at your company than your team has over theirs. You have potential that you can live into. Your work allows you to explore and express your true identity.

Identity. That’s the gap. The bridge between you and your team is identity. Specifically, the bridge is empowering people to explore and express their true identity. To support them, guide them, help them in expressing their potential, and, as a result, live into their truest self—their identity.

To be all in for your employees is to recognize and nurture their potential, to set the stage for your team to tap into their biggest desires and empower them to express their real selves. I believe my role is to help everyone on my team become more of who they are, who they feel called to be. When you adopt this belief as your own, you can more easily create the conditions you need to build your all-in team. If you don't make this shift, the formula I'm about to share with you won't work as well as it could. It just won't.

Bronnie Ware, author of *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*, who herself experienced years of unfulfilling work, started a process while working in palliative care. She asked her dying patients to share their biggest regrets. Number one? "I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me." True to myself. That is the friggin' definition of identity. People want to live their identity. They want to explore and develop their potential. People want to be the most of who they can be.

And there you have it. A great leader empowers people to be themselves fully. When you do that earnestly and perpetually, your team will blossom. Your people will blossom. And you too will blossom.

THE ALL-IN FORMULA

There is no magic wand for the recruiting process.

A fancy interview question such as "When should you speed through a yellow light versus stop for one?" tells you nothing about a candidate. Asking A-players to introduce their A-player friends rarely yields much. And while a résumé packed with loads of applicable experience may give you a bit more than nothing, it is potentially the most dangerous misleader in the world of recruiting and retention.

Sometimes we try to fix our staffing issues by making “one key shift,” but humans don’t work like that. No single question brings in the best and filters out the rest. Your existing team won’t turn on like a lightbulb; they won’t suddenly become the employees you dream about simply by your introducing motivating values.

To flourish, we need the right set of conditions, created by great leaders. Over time, I did assemble a remarkable team. In fact, my team is *beyond* anything I could have dreamt up. What worked for me and for the leaders I have subsequently interviewed and counseled wasn’t one strategy that produced better results over another, or one insight that mattered more than the rest. It was a formula that ensured my team cared about my company as much as I did. And it wasn’t through coercion and correction, or rewards and recognition. It was through something more fundamental. Something more essential to the way we humans operate. The formula works for the company I lead. It works for the leaders I have consulted. And it will work for you if you embrace it. I am sure of it, because it is the most empowering way to help people be themselves. Their true selves.

The All-In Formula has four parts, and it breaks down like this:

fit + ability + safety + ownership = all-in team

I call it the FASO Model. I simply pronounce it “faso.” As in rhyming with the word “lasso.” Let’s get this rodeo started, shall we?

Fit. A company is a congregation of people and tools that work in concert to achieve specific outcomes. People will come, grow, and go. People aren’t the constant in a company, nor should they be; the roles are. To ensure your employees are a good fit, first understand all the

functions of a role, and the qualities and qualifications required for that role. Then enlist people for the position matching their potential, talents, and identity to the role's tasks. Don't look for a person who can do it all; that is a rare situation. Look for the person who is best at what you need most; they are abundantly available.

Ability. Great leaders know people are far more than their résumé. Hiring based on experience and education is limiting—for your team, and for your company's growth. Rather than match a person's qualifications to a role, consider a person's innate, experiential, and potential abilities. People who want to do a job always outperform people who need to do a job. Seek the want. The desire. The thirst.

Safety. People do their best when they are not worried by the rest. Protect your team and set up conditions in which they feel safe, enabling them to lean in to contribution. There are three types of safety to consider: Physical safety, where they have protection from harm to their physical self. Financial safety, where they can maintain their life standard without concern for how they will sustain themselves each day. And psychological safety, where they have confidence that they won't be punished, ridiculed, or humiliated for expressing their true opinions, beliefs, background, or experience.

Ownership. If you want your team to act like owners, make sure they feel like owners. This one insight alone, put into effect, transforms perfunctory performance into all-out effort. Once we have an employee who does the right job for their abilities, who feels safe to be themselves at work, the next critical step is to foster psychological ownership—a sense of control, understanding, and personalization—over a task, project, or idea.

Psychological ownership is the strongest influence over self-identity: What is mine is me and what is me is mine. My ideas are me. My possessions are an extension of me. When team members are designated ownership over aspects of their job, the natural tendency is for them to put everything they have into it.

There you have it. The All-In Formula. F+A+S+O. It can be helpful to think about the formula like this:

Fit and ability (where potential meets opportunity—identity is developed)

Safety and ownership (where development meets environment—identity is expressed)

Each part is effective on its own, but together, these strategies have a multiplicative effect. Deploy the formula properly, and I promise you, you will build the team of your dreams.

FASO will care for you so well that I invite you to make it the primary tool in your leadership tool kit. Like a quality Swiss Army knife or similar multitool, FASO will serve you in circumstances foreseen and not. So memorize it.

I love a good acronym, but I have the tendency to garble things up. When I was a kid, I struggled with memorizing facts, or strings of numbers, or, well, anything. Until someone whispered in my ear a mnemonic.

My seventh-grade music class scared the hell out of me. In chorus the teacher would go down the line and make each student sing a few words a cappella. Sara McMickle, who stood next to me, always nailed her part. As in Celine Dion nailed it. Then I would go and, you

know, not nail it. “Again, Michael,” the teacher would say. I would feel the heat on my face, and I would sing worse. The teacher would repeat her request, this time in a sing-say melody. Ahhhhh!

The only thing more terror-inducing to me than singing was memorizing the music notes on a sheet. Seemingly random dots, identified by random letters, sat across random lines that started off with a squiggly cliff. Or clef. Or cliff-clef. Ugh. But then Sara whispered something to me. “Every good boy deserves fudge.” She pointed at each line on the sheet music clef. E for “every,” G for “good,” B for “boy,” D for “deserves,” and F for “fudge.” From that moment on, I never forgot it. I still couldn’t sing, but you can’t have everything.

FACE is a simple way to remember the notes in the empty spaces on the clef. HOMES is a simple mnemonic to remember the Great Lakes—Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior. And if you want to be an extraordinary leader of extraordinary employees you will greatly benefit from a simple mnemonic too. Try this one: FASO, a Fully Autonomous and Seamless Organization. That’s what you want! And FASO will get you there. If you remember it and deploy it, you will become the best damn leader for the best damn team. Damn it.

MY UNSTOPPABLE TEAM

I don’t have to work weekends anymore. My punishing schedule is long gone. From time to time, though, I still go in on early Saturday mornings to write or brainstorm. I like the special quiet of an empty office before the world wakes.

One Saturday, I looked up from my notebook to see Amy Cartelli walking in sipping a cup of coffee. She was immediately followed by her husband and both of their sons, all walking in stride. It looked

like a 7 a.m. weekend military drill. Three burly men, marching in line, carrying heavy boxes.

"Oh, hey, Mike," said Drill Sergeant Amy. "We're just dropping off books."

"What books? Where did they come from?" I asked.

"These are the copies of *Get Different*. We've been having trouble getting deliveries here at the office, so I redirected the books to my home."

I helped put the boxes away. As I watched Amy and her family leave, I sat stunned. Not only did Amy solve a logistical problem for our company on her own, but she also addressed an issue that I didn't even know about in the first place. She took it upon herself to reroute books and ensure their safe delivery, recruited her family to move the books, and came in on her day off to deliver them. No one asked her to do this. No one expected her to do this. And yet there she was, caring about my company as much as I do.

Over the years, I've experienced many moments like this with my current team—countless examples of how FASO impacts performance—and Amy delivering the books is one of my favorites. You see, she's a part-time employee who only ever wanted to be part-time. And yet even though she doesn't work a full schedule, even though she doesn't need the job, even though she is not locked into her job because of amazing compensation or some other advantage, she *still cares as much about my company as I do*.

What if you had a team full of Amys? What could you do? What goals could you accomplish—for yourself, and for your company? What problems could you solve? What doors would open for you? What projects could you take out of the drawer and try again? What dreams could you realize?

Let's find out.

THE FIRST STEP

I hope you see the potential for being a better leader by approaching team building in a whole new way. Of course, it is unreasonable to expect a transformation overnight. I don't expect you to implement the strategies in this book perfectly, nor do I expect you to dig in tomorrow. I do hope, though, that you'll take the first step today. Then one more tomorrow. And then, eventually, you'll leap.

The first step is easy: Commit to being all in for your team.

I have found that the best way to stick with a new improved you is to first commit. Email me at Mike@MikeMichalowicz.com with the subject line "I'm An All-In Leader" and share a few thoughts with me on how you intend to build your unstoppable team. This is my real email address, and I will get your email. I have an amazing team who help me manage my email, since I am fortunate to have hundreds of reader emails in my inbox at any given moment. My teammates review and summarize the emails and get my direction on the response. So, yes, I will get back to you. I will surely have a colleague press the send button or type what I dictate, but you can be sure my response is my words to you.

Eliminate Entropy

Teams are temporary, positions are permanent. No one stays in a job forever, not even you. Yes, occasionally a person will stay with one company for their entire adult life. (Shout-out to my old man, who did just that.) But does that person stay in the same job the entire time? Might they work with different people and do different things during their years or decades of work? Might they retire one day? Inevitably people come and go. So you first need to understand the positions the company needs to grow healthily, and then fulfill those permanent positions with the best, nonpermanent talent. Not the other way around.

Recruiting magic happens when we understand all the parts a position needs first and then seek the individuals (emphasis on the plural) who can fulfill those needs. And yet we tend to focus primarily on finding the right person for a job *title* before we have clarity

about which tasks are the most important within that title. We think, “I need a receptionist,” and we may have a list of fifteen duties we want that person to perform, but are all their duties necessary for *this* person or even this role? And which tasks are the most important? What if the title was broken into its task elements and an individual’s best abilities were matched to those elements? What if they just nailed three critical duties and the other stuff could be assigned to others?

On my desk is a pile of family photos, books I’ve read, paper notes scatter-stacked, two “dried” (aka dead) plants, and other stuff I haven’t found a home for yet. When I first set up my desk, everything had its proper space. It was organized and presentable. But then bits and pieces started to pile up. Now I’m not even sure what color my desk is. Heaven knows what hides away under the piles. This gradual decline into disorder, known as entropy, is a constant in life.

Your organizational entropy is a constant too. Blame it on variables. Take a nickel, for example. It has two sides. Flip it in the air, and you will predictably get either heads or tails. Of course, there is a third option—it could land on its edge. Experiments and simulations confirm this happens once in every six thousand or so attempts. Now take one hundred coins and flip them all in the air at the same time. What are the chances all the coins will land on their edge? Zero—or at least the chances are so close to zero that you will never see this happen. Sure, there is some remote mathematical possibility, just as there’s a remote chance your home was built on top of an ancient cemetery and the poltergeists are toying with you before they take possession of your soul, but let’s be real: it will never play out that way in reality. Some nickels will be heads up, some tails up,

some will roll away under your couch to be swallowed by the demons hiding there. The hundred coins won't line up, they will scatter. Disarray is natural. Entropy is expected.

Entropy is a constant in teams too. As a business evolves, more tasks need completion, more projects need overseeing, things change, and soon you have a mess of "stuff," duties and responsibilities that need to be dusted off and reorganized. In the early days of growing a business, most employees do all sorts of jobs they wouldn't normally do. And as we grow, we promote people, hire new people, move other people into different roles, and can even lose track of the main objective of their job.

A position may have a list of responsibilities with a bunch of tasks on it that were inherited from the person who had the job before them, and nobody remembers why they took on that task in the first place—or even if the task is needed at all. Sometimes the list includes to-dos that were supposed to be temporary and became permanent for no good reason. And then we have the stuff an employee takes on because someone left the company or morphed into a different role, and "someone" had to take over aspects of that person's job. Welcome to organizational entropy.

Once you appreciate that disorder is the normal and natural tendency of all teams, you can apply strategies to prevent it. Just as you can clean a messy desk, or position nickels to stand on their edge, you can align your team. And to do this most effectively, you must reduce variability. We achieve this by setting fewer rules with bigger importance and setting fewer objectives with bigger impact.

Organization takes effort. This is just a fact. Without it, entropy will win. But you can apply effort smartly. When you are clear on the outcome, you blaze the clearest path to it and take down as many

barriers as possible. *Your* job is to clear up the confusion, the unnecessary stuff. Your job is to bring priority and organization for your team and with your team. Your job is to fight organizational entropy and to empower them to do the same.

Founded in 1894, Gibson is iconic in the guitar industry. But icons are susceptible to the degrading effects of entropy too. By the 1960s the brand had been rolled up by a conglomerate and within a decade of that was on the verge of closure. Then CEO Henry E. Juskiewicz leaned in to the natural entropy by expanding the product licenses, creating new instruments, and reviving old product lines. This strategy backfired because consumers were confused by the sheer number of products and configurations. In 2018, Gibson filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

When James “JC” Curleigh took over as CEO, his number one objective was to stop the entropy. He set out to make far fewer guitars, far better. He set fewer, more important rules. One was “no more dust.” Literal dust, because when a guitar gets it in the final laminate, it destroys the look. Another simple rule: touch the guitars fewer times, since every time they are handled, the chances for damage increase. He figured out what was needed first, and then asked who can fill that need.

Great leaders don’t start by recruiting the best people for the role. Instead, they determine what functions are most important and then find—and keep—the best people to perform those functions. Organizational clarity happens by setting objectives and expectations first, then the match is made with existing or new team members.

THE MUST-HAVE LISTS

The risk leaders run—and it is human nature—is to prioritize everything equally. Everything is important. All customers are always right. All tasks must get done. Do it all, do it all perfectly. But the reality is only a few things have big impact, and many other things are of low value.

Part of being all in for our employees is taking the time to get clear about the main function of their role and then paving the way for them to execute that job. Within their grab bag list of responsibilities is the most crucial job within that role, in terms of their regular activity. It is called the Primary Job, which I explain in detail in my book *Clockwork*. This is the core work within the field of responsibility for an employee that they must complete to serve the company, and everything else on the list is secondary to the Primary Job.

You can run a simple exercise to find the Primary Job for anyone. Since I just shared a story about Gibson, I checked for their current job opportunities at this writing. One is a full-time position at their Bozeman, Montana, factory for the afternoon shift. The job lists multiple “essential functions,” such as: execute standard operating procedures, maintain an appropriate flow rate, and the use of spring steel blades. Apparently the blades are used to scrape the guitars’ non-wooden accents, bringing out the signature aesthetic of a Gibson guitar. And there you have it. Yes, producing fast enough is necessary; drifting from the SOPs (standard operating procedures) and “winging it” is a no-no. But nothing is more important than the scrape. That is the Primary Job and everything else is secondary to it. You can do this for any job listing. And you surely must do it for *your* job listing. Prioritize what matters most.

Before you hire or move employees into different positions, break

down what you need for each role—your Must-Have List. The process is simple, and you can knock it out in less than thirty minutes.

Here are the steps:

1. For one position in your company, write down every task and responsibility. Include the small stuff, the seasonal stuff, and the stuff you tend to add when you “don’t have anyone else to do it.”
2. Next, identify the Primary Job. Of all the things on the list, which one thing—and it can only be one—is the most important in moving the company forward? Write “PJ” in the Rank column next to the Primary Job.
3. Now sequence the rest of the list in order of importance.
4. Looking at your ordered list, highlight the “must-haves,” the tasks that are absolutely necessary in that position.
5. Everything highlighted is something your employee needs to be able to perform or quickly gain the ability to perform. Anything not highlighted is stuff that “would be nice” for them to be able to do but can wait, can be imperfect, or can be transferred to others.
6. Now that you did it for one, do it for others. Or have others do it for the others.

ROLE: IN-HOUSE COPYWRITER	
RESPONSIBILITY	RANK
Editing articles	
Social media copy	
Proofing + grammar checking	
Social media tracking	
Writing articles	
Research	

Figure 1.0

Record each responsibility currently served by the employee(s) in the defined position.

ROLE: IN-HOUSE COPYWRITER	
RESPONSIBILITY	RANK
Editing articles	4
Social media copy	2
Proofing + grammar checking	5
Social media tracking	6
Writing articles	1
Research	3

Figure 1.1

Rank the importance of each responsibility in relation to all listed responsibilities.

ROLE: IN-HOUSE COPYWRITER	
RESPONSIBILITY	RANK
Editing articles	4
Social media copy	2
Proofing + grammar checking	5
Social media tracking	6
Writing articles	1
Research	3

Figure 1.2

Highlight the minimum “must-have” responsibilities for the position for any future (or existing) candidates.

When you hire a new employee, or move an employee into a different role, consider if they would be a good fit for the highlighted duties, the must-haves. Don’t pay much mind to the rest; those things don’t do much to serve the company.

Now that you’ve carefully defined the duties for each position, consider the type of person who would be the best fit for that role. Think in terms of qualities and qualifications—the 2Qs. For example, let’s assume your receptionist’s Primary Job is directing inbound support phone calls. The qualities you need for that role are a cheerful attitude, positive energy, a supportive nature, and the ability to be patient under pressure. Qualifications may include previous experience as a receptionist, host, or greeter. You may also want someone who has been trained in customer service, or in a particular phone or software system.

Then do the must-have ranking process. Which qualities are the most critical? Ask yourself, do they *really* need to be meticulous and charming? Or is it meticulous over charming? Or vice versa. And—you know the routine—highlight the absolute “must-haves.” Do the same ranking system for qualifications, most important to least, and highlight the must-haves. Does the four-year college degree *really* matter? Does previous experience even matter if they have the highlighted qualities?

The more must-haves you have, the more you are excluding potential candidates. And the fewer you have, the greater the risk that you will be considering candidates who are not a good fit. So use the old handy-dandy 80/20 rule. This is where you derive 80 percent of the benefit from 20 percent of the qualities.

You may be thinking, “Mike, I already *have* a list of qualities and qualifications for each position.” I get it. It may seem as though this is a step you can skip because you sense redundancy. First, a reminder—this is a list you create *after* you reduce the variables and clarify the structure of each role. Second, the qualities matter most.

The only thing you can do for new employees is give them skills and experience. You can’t give them the intangibles, like their attitude, energy, drive, intelligence, or, for that matter, their heart. Don’t hire employees based upon the few things that you can provide them. Hire them based on the many things they naturally do or don’t have. I’ve tried giving intelligence—to myself—and nope, I didn’t get smarter. If you can’t do it for yourself, good luck doing it for others.

DECONSTRUCTING HIGH PERFORMERS

I've been lucky to have found more than a few high-performing employees. When I discover a true superstar, I have the urge to lock them into their position, because I can't even imagine replacing them. Of course, this is limiting and not realistic. Employees move up and move on, which means you'll eventually have to find someone to take on their role. A common urge is to find their clone. The thing is, what makes these high-performing employees so special is unique to them. The chances that you will find another person "just like them" are somewhere between zero and none.

Leaders often have the same "locked into a person" mentality for multiple roles in their business because, as business grows and changes, we tend to build a position around an individual. When they leave, we call for "all hands on deck," aka panic, to cover the lost talent. Finding someone to replicate the multirole rock star has similar odds: zero to none, minus one.

As you review your must-haves for each role in your organization, consider if you have a position that requires a set of qualities and qualifications that simply cannot be replicated by anyone other than the person currently in that role. If you do, take some time to deconstruct what it is that makes them amazing. Then, if that person moves on from your company or moves up (or over) within your company, you can find people to take on *parts* of their job, not the whole job.

Kelsey Ayres is the best coworker I've ever had the opportunity to work with, the ultimate superstar. She started out working part-time as my personal assistant. Over time, her duties and responsibilities expanded. She is now the president of our company. Her role has evolved over the years, and she's had to give up all the duties she performed as my personal assistant, such as handling my travel schedule

for speaking engagements, managing my email, and creating our marketing campaigns.

While I *wanted* to find another person just like Kelsey to fulfill all those duties, I knew that would be harder than finding a needle in a haystack—more like trying to find a single piece of glitter, painted hay color, in a haystack. I also knew her position had evolved over time, and her work responsibilities had entropy maximus. So, we—Kelsey and I—deconstructed the roles she served.

First, we looked at her responsibilities, the looong list of duties she performed not just daily but also weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually. Then we determined her Primary Job, scheduling my speaking events. We then discussed what the president's Primary Job would likely be. I had been fulfilling that role, and it was management of the rest of the team.

Now, to be clear, I was serving the president role, but I was doing a shitty job at it. I rarely met with people in any organized fashion. Reviews happened when they reminded me another year had passed. Just because I was bad at it doesn't mean it wasn't the Primary Job. Either we had to transfer Kelsey's former Primary Job to someone else or make a new prioritization decision. If Kelsey was going to both manage the people and continue my scheduling, we had to pick which one takes top billing. The goal in this transition was to transfer the management role to Kelsey, and then move scheduling speaking events to someone else.

Then we looked at the other tasks she needed to transfer and identified Kelsey's collective qualities and qualifications. Qualities are innate. But qualifications accumulate. So we noted where she gained her qualifications—on the job here, or prior to joining us—since it might help indicate where the qualifications may come from for the next person.

TASKS SERVED BY: KELSEY						
	QUALITIES		QUALIFICATIONS	FROM	TASKS	MUST
1	Inclusiveness	A	Typing abilities	HAD	One-on-one's	1, 2, 5, 7, B
2	Kindness	B	Fluent in English	HAD	Mike's schedule	2, 3, 6, A, B
3	Accurate research	C	Four-year college degree	HAD	Article writing	3, 8, A, B
4	Fast	D	Past work social work	HAD	Research	3, A, B
5	Emotional intelligence	E	Social media skills	GOT	Article writing	3, 4, A, B
6	Dynamic scheduling	F	US citizen	HAD	Accounting	8, A
7	Listener	G			Writing	7, 8, A, B
8	Meticulous	H			Social media	A, E
9	Frugal	I				
10	Fierce loyalty	J				

Figure 2.0

Deconstruct an existing team member.

STEP 1 ■ Fill in the name of the person you are deconstructing.

STEP 2 ■ In the QUALITIES column, list all the positive qualities this person has that supports them in their role.

STEP 3 ■ In the QUALIFICATIONS column, list all the qualifications this person has that supports them in their role and/or any individual tasks.

STEP 4 ■ In the FROM column, next to each qualification, write down if the person came to your employ with the qualifications (had) or gained the skills while on the job with you (got).

STEP 5 ■ In the TASKS column, write down each task this individual does.

STEP 6 ■ In the MUST column, insert the corresponding number for each quality and corresponding letter for each qualification that is necessary to be successful at the task.

STEP 7 ■ As you evaluate individuals to fill different tasks, use the TASKS and MUST columns to match the best-suited person for each task.

Next, Kelsey and I played a quick matching game. Of the tasks we were moving to the next person, we identified the qualities and qualifications needed for *each task*. For example, Kelsey is fiercely loyal. She is also frugal. This made her a perfect fit for me because of one of my business Immutable Laws that I refer to as “Blood Money.” We treat money like blood, with the utmost care and respect, because without it our business would die. Kelsey’s loyalty to the “Blood Money” Immutable Law, combined with her frugality, meant I could always count on her to find the most affordable flights and accommodations for my business travel.

When it came time to transfer the personal assistant duties, we knew we needed to hire someone to do that who was inherently “kind” and “accurate.” We went on to define those words. For example, “kind” means to us that we care for and respect people’s interests, but it does not mean we are a pushover. We are firm in what we can and can’t do, but we aren’t a jerk about it. This helped us find the right person for the role, Erin Chazotte, who is both kind and accurate. Plus, she brought a frugality that was like Kelsey’s. And she brought a “sternness” that we didn’t have before. She expanded on

qualities with her own unique talents that made her work within the role even more effective.

Scheduling is not the only responsibility, and there are some other qualities required for other tasks, of course, but in understanding what made Kelsey great at her job we could better find someone to do *parts* of her former job, rather than try to find a Kelsey clone. And you know what happened? We found another superstar in Erin, who is better at scheduling than anyone I worked with before. I believe this is in part due to the work we did “deconstructing” Kelsey. It is also due to the way that Kelsey now leads our company and supports our employees, which you are about to learn.

Erin is such a superstar, in fact, that we are now deconstructing *her* role to find a person to become Kelsey’s personal assistant. Will we find another superstar employee? Maybe, maybe not. But with this process, the odds are in our favor.

MATCH TALENT TO TASK

Clint Pulver couldn’t sit still. He fidgeted constantly and was deemed an “out of control” kid by his teachers. He would drum his fingers on his desk, on his chair, on any surface he could find. His teachers tried to discipline him, to help him focus. Nothing worked for very long, so the school’s principal came up with a genius idea. He told Clint to sit on his hands. Yeah, genius all right.

You can either try to change people to be someone they are not, or you can choose to channel who they already are to the outcomes you—and they—want. Changing myself is near impossible, so why in the world would I ever think I could change someone else? That quality they have, stop trying to block it or correct it and start trying to channel it.

Out of raw frustration, the school put squirming, finger-tapping Clint into a special education class. But the teacher in that room knew the secret to success: Channel behaviors. Don't change them. That teacher, Mr. Jensen, noticed Clint's flying fingers and said, "Oh! You're a drummer." He gave Clint a pair of drumsticks and that was that.

Clint has been playing the drums ever since, and he is *epic*. He played for professional musicians in major venues like the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood, for *America's Got Talent*, and later went on to found the Utah Valley University Drumline and the Green Man Group, which is like the Blue Man Group, but bigger and bad-assier at drums, in my humble opinion.

When an employee doesn't perform in a role the way we expect them to, we tend to think they are not the right fit for our company. It could be, though, that they simply *are* the right person but were inserted into the wrong role.

If you've wondered if an employee will ever measure up, ask yourself, Did you match them with the position that suits them best? Maybe you have an all-in employee waiting to happen, if only you simply recognize their potential and channel who they naturally are. Maybe you have an amazing drummer on your hands, and your job is to stop trying to get them to play guitar better.

Everyone has a strength. I don't think of our employees as employees. I think of them in the same way I think about my family. In my role as a dad, I try to cherish my kids for who they are. Admittedly, this is a discipline. There are times I struggle to "love" my children for their decisions. But the essence is they are human beings whom I have the honor of sharing a life journey with. They, as you and I, should be loved for who they inherently are. I get to know their strengths and weaknesses. I try never to helicopter them, even though

at times my heart is screaming to step in and “protect” them. I let them grow, experience the joys and hardships that are a natural part of life, and in all of it hope they achieve full independence, confidence, and love for themselves.

Please don’t take this analogy to suggest that you are the parent, and your colleagues are children. That interpretation can result in treating adults like kids. That is not the intent, and it is the opposite of what a great leader does. What I want you to see is that, like a great parent, your job is to give them freedom and support them to grow into who they naturally are. They are part of your family, but they are not your minions.

Once I understand that my job with my colleagues is to support them into the full development of themselves, I am far less about control and more about guiding. I become more fluid in aligning their work experience to amplify their life experience, which in turn amplifies the work experience. The upward spiral makes everyone win: my colleagues, myself, our team, our clients.

As you implement the All-In Formula, you may discover that some of your employees are not in the right roles. And as your company grows and the world evolves, you’ll likely have to create new positions. I feel the default is that when the business has the need, we look for someone new. But in reality, when a business has a need, the first ask should be, “What do we do that the business doesn’t need?” and then get rid of that. Then ask, “Who here can naturally fill the need we have, and, as a result, do the tasks that play more into who they are?”

Far more people on this planet can quickly fill “entry-level” stuff than “high-level” or “complex” stuff. But your existing people have a leg up. They know the company, and you know them. They may

have the skills you need. So seek to reposition people within your company first. Match tasks to talents. Then seek people from the unknown outside to fill the “simpler” or more “entry-level” stuff, and have them develop within your company.

A bit of an asterisk here: You may also know people who are not on your staff but are associated with your company in some capacity. Your familiarity with their qualities and qualifications, and their familiarity with your company, can enable them to get up to speed faster on “senior” stuff. We’ve hired clients, competitors, subcontractors, and former interns this way, to great success.

THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE INDIVIDUAL

Have you ever seen a barn move across a field, seemingly on its own? If you happened to be on the road adjacent to Joseph Hochstetler’s farm in Knox County, Ohio, on March 9, 2019, you might have thought your eyes were playing tricks on you. Looking closer, you would have seen feet underneath the red pole barn—three hundred pairs, to be exact.

Moving a fifty-by-one-hundred-foot multiton structure is a difficult job. You have two options: you can disassemble it and put it back together at the new location, or you can jack it up, use multiple synchronized cranes to place it on custom-designed, synchronized flatbeds with multiple semitruck cabs pulling it, drive it to the new location, and use another group of cranes, in a carefully choreographed move, to lower it onto the new spot. That’s all doable, but precarious and hard—unless you’re Amish.

Prohibited from using powered tools and machinery, Hochstetler enlisted the help of his three hundred closest friends. From inside the

barn, they picked it up in unison and carried it 150 feet across a field, then moved to the outside of the barn and turned it 90 degrees. And they got the job done in less than five minutes.

For the Amish, helping the community is part of their faith. Because everyone rallies when someone is in need, they can often do what seems impossible—build a barn in a day or move one in five minutes. No one says, “That’s not my problem.” They say, “It’s our problem and I am part of the solution.” They set aside their own work—their Primary Job—and band together to solve problems and meet challenges. And because they are all committed to the success of the community, they get it done quickly, and then go right back to their Primary Job.

Technology changes our world so rapidly that we face our own “move a barn without power machinery” challenges on the regular. To successfully meet these challenges, we need a nimble team desirous to jump in and help when needed. Rather than say, “That’s not my job,” we need employees like Hochstetler’s pals, people who value community—the good of the whole—above all. Primary Jobs are just that—primary. They are not all the time, eight hours a day. And when we need coordinated, collective help, we need a team that gladly puts all hands in. Or in Hochstetler’s case, all hands and feet. (By the way, he didn’t respond to my letters asking him to call me for an interview. Apparently he adheres to the Amish rules and doesn’t have a phone.)

By eliminating disorder in your team, you make it easier for people to jump in when needed and then get back to their Primary Job.

GOOD AND GREAT LEADERSHIP

Change happens over time. It is rare that someone can instantly replace one behavior with another. For most of us humans, change is a process of experimentation, proving to ourselves what works and what doesn't. I realize that while you may think some of the ideas in this book could be game changers, or at least worth trying, you may also see some of the ideas in this book as too radical. Or you may think, "That may work for another business, but it won't for mine."

I think skepticism is healthy. And it is also healthy to challenge our established beliefs. But we need to do it in increments. If you try something big once and it fails, that doesn't mean it won't work for your business. It may just mean you need to tailor it to your company or get more practice with it.

Great leaders are willing to challenge their own beliefs. They are willing to prove to themselves, through earnest experimentation and adequate repetition, whether something works or not. In that spirit, I have prepared a list of new approaches I include in *All In*, and the correlating traditional (perhaps old-school) idea that exists.

I suggest that you try the new stuff in small, bite-size pieces and curtail the old stuff in increments. I don't expect everything to work for your leadership style or your corporate community. But I do hope you'll make the effort to discover a better approach, and in the process, a better you.

Good Leaders	Great Leaders
<p><i>Change Roles Around Employees' Abilities</i></p> <p>Employees should be lifers and we should do all we can to keep them, as long as they deliver value—including morphing roles to suit them. Good leaders use this approach because it triggers retention. It also restricts individual growth.</p>	<p><i>Keep Roles Consistent</i></p> <p>Task assignments change over time. To deliver a consistent offering, your company must have consistent roles (collections of tasks). People will grow and people may go, but the roles will stay. Great leaders define the tasks for each role first, and then find the best person to fill that role.</p>
<p><i>Place Equal Importance on Each Quality and Qualification</i></p> <p>No human being will have every single attribute you need. Good leaders want the person who has the most qualities and qualifications for a role.</p>	<p><i>Prioritize Specific Qualities and Qualifications</i></p> <p>A person's potential is maximized when they lean in to a few talents. It's not about being well-rounded. Great leaders identify the few qualities and qualifications that will have the greatest impact in a role and find someone with those attributes.</p>
<p><i>Prioritize Experience</i></p> <p>Experience is relevant. It can be an indicator of ability and skill. Good leaders hire people who have enough experience to "hit the ground running" on day one.</p>	<p><i>Prioritize Intangibles</i></p> <p>You can give someone experience, but you will never be able to change the intangibles. Great leaders prioritize hiring for intangibles over experience.</p>
<p><i>Replace High Performers with Other High Performers</i></p> <p>When a high performer leaves the company, good leaders look for their replacement.</p>	<p><i>Deconstruct High Performers into Distinct Tasks</i></p> <p>Most employees do multiple tasks. High performers tend to do more tasks than others. When that person leaves, great leaders look at the tasks they were doing and separate them into categories. This is the process of "fractionalizing" a person's work. Then they transfer the individual elements of work to other team roles and multiple individuals.</p>

AVAILABLE THROUGH THESE RETAILERS

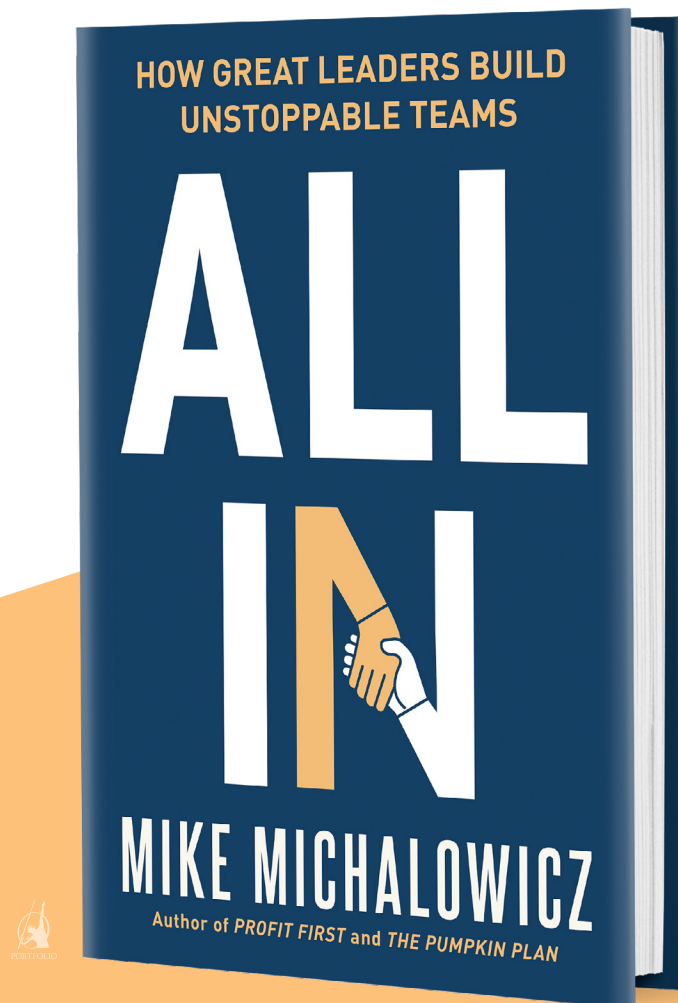
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