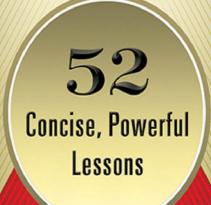
### JOHN MANNING

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### THE

# DISCIPLINED LEADER



Keeping the Focus
on What Really Matters

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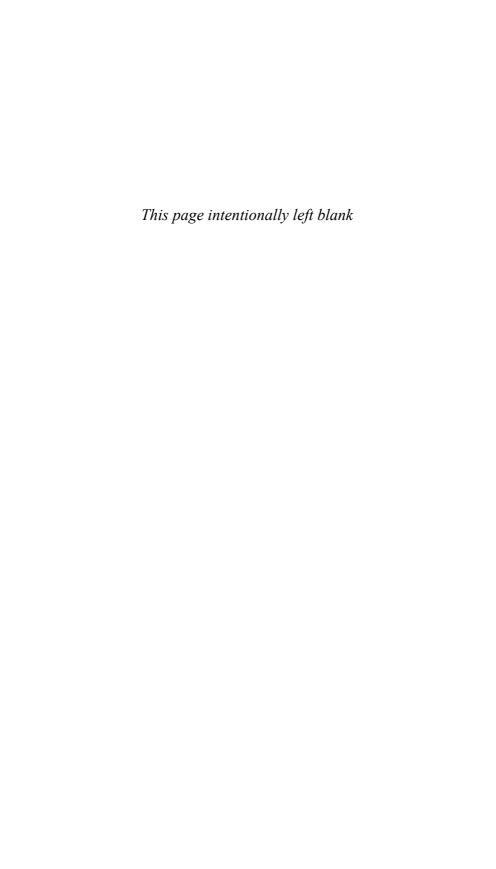
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#### More Praise for The Disciplined Leader

- "I absolutely recommend this book to leaders in all fields. John Manning and MAP really zero in on the essentials of leadership. You will create and see fantastic results!"
  - -David Emmett, Senior Vice President, Conservation International
- "Manning's easy and concise fifty-two-lesson format will direct any leader to the Vital Few things that will make an enormous difference."
  - -Roland Spongberg, President and CEO, WKS Restaurant Group
- "Most companies have talented employees, but the successful ones are able to keep everyone focused on the same vision. That vision has to be reiterated by senior management regularly. John Manning has laid out how in a superb way."
  - —Don Johnson, Vice Chairman, former President and CEO, and founder of American Business Bank
- "As a CEO, ask yourself the following question: How effective is the transmission mechanism for your vision to employees? If you commit to the process in this book, you'll soon see the strategic alignment you found so elusive is actually very obtainable."
  - -Joseph Panebianco, President and CEO, AnnieMac Home Mortgage
- "Whether you're looking for tools that help manage accountability or need your leadership team to tackle tough business challenges, *The Disciplined Leader* can help you get better results *faster*!"
  - -Chris Hardeman, Vice President of Sales, Act-On Software
- "Everything is important to owners and executives, but it takes a lot of discipline to put aside the less important things. *The Disciplined Leader* helps you concentrate on your Vital Few."
  - —Jesus Cardenas Jr. and Jose Cardenas, Senior Vice Presidents, Cardenas Markets
- "It's all too easy to get lost in the onslaught of information and decisions that characterize a leader's day. John Manning helps you cut through the noise and zero in on the things that are the most vital for you."
  - -Lori Gangemi, CEO, AbilityFirst
- "Being a great leader requires focus on the things that matter and the discipline to hold yourself accountable. In *The Disciplined Leader*, John Manning encourages leaders who want to lead their team to greatness and keeps them focused on the Vital Few—the most important things."
  - -Craig S. Nelson, Chairman, Nelson Family of Companies

- "The Disciplined Leader provides advice in fifty-two brief chapters that are crisp, clear, and actionable. This book is a must-read for young career-minded high performers as well as seasoned leaders looking for ways to fine-tune their game."
  - —Tim Psomas, Chairman of the Board Emeritus, Psomas
- "The Disciplined Leader gives the invaluable wisdom that comes from experience—it's the go-to tool for a leader at any level."
  - -Steve Distante, CEO, Vanderbilt Financial Group
- "The Disciplined Leader will become a useful tool for your business, enabling you to identify and prioritize the vital factors that will allow you to manage and grow your business."
  - -Robert Curry, CEO, Alamitos Enterprises (Jiffy Lube franchisee)
- "Few of us are born leaders. For the great majority it is a constant learning and growing experience. John Manning carefully defines what it takes to be a dynamic leader and offers a pragmatic and effective process to become one. *The Disciplined Leader* is a must-have for anyone who is serious about being effective and passionate about inspiring others."
  - -Albert J. Zdenek Jr., President and CEO, Traust Sollus Wealth Management, LLC
- "The Disciplined Leader provides useful tools and techniques to drive accountability and a collective focus on results throughout your organization."
- -Damon Gersh, President and CEO, Maxons Restorations Inc.

# THE DISCIPLINED LEADER



# THE DISCIPLINED LEADER

## Keeping the Focus on What Really Matters

52

Concise, Powerful Lessons

#### JOHN MANNING

**Edited by Katie Roberts** 



Berrett–Koehler Publishers, Inc. a BK Business book

#### The Disciplined Leader

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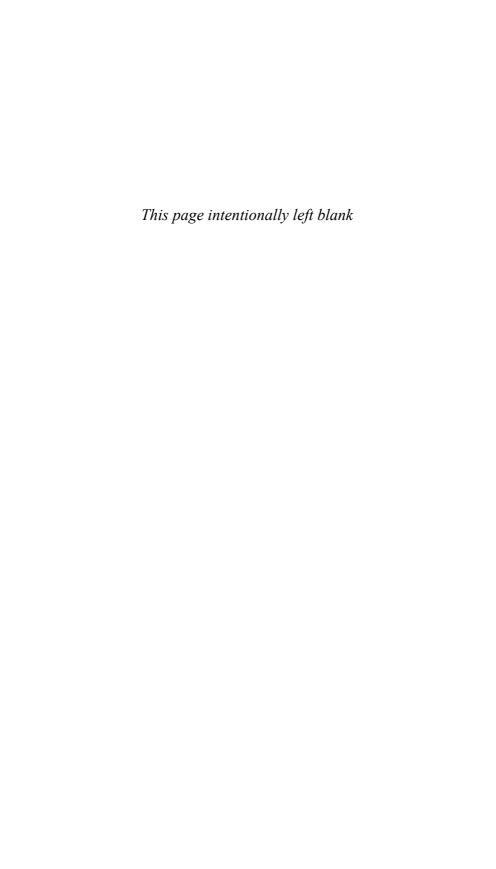
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To our MAP consultants who help our clients become Disciplined Leaders through purpose, truth, and wisdom.



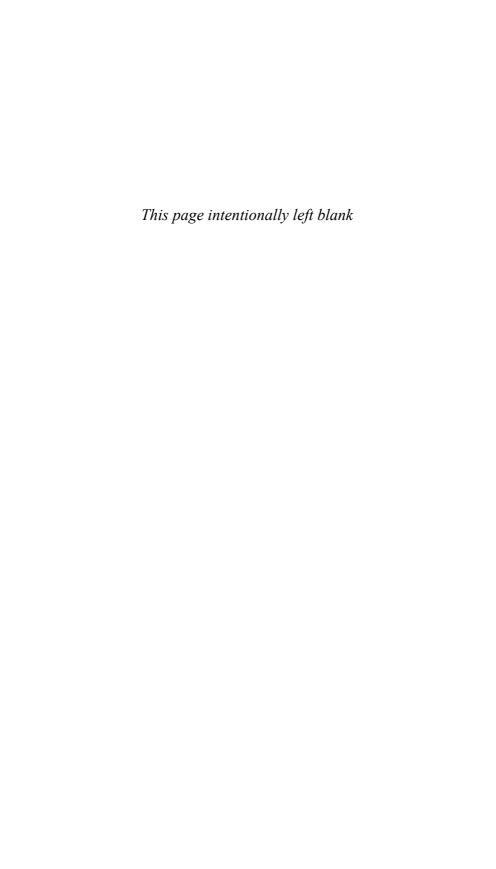
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### Introduction

While there's no perfect leader, you've probably known some pretty good ones—and perhaps even a few who've been truly great. If I challenged you to describe what makes great leaders great in a few key words, what would come to your mind? As president of a general management consulting firm called Management Action Programs, Inc. (MAP), I asked our consultants this question, and the word *disciplined* came up repeatedly.

In doing research for this book, however, I was curious to find out if people knew what a Disciplined Leader was. So I started asking a lot of other people, and this informal research project turned out to be quite an eye-opening exercise. The majority of people couldn't give me a clear answer. Many could readily cite examples of the greatest, most famous leaders. Some rattled off leadership traits, describing their favorite leader's style, as well as a few derogatory trademarks of their not-so-favorite leaders. A few quickly went off on a tangent, talking about the dire need for great leadership, not only in business but in our world. However, in spite of the varied feedback, every person I asked struggled with summarizing in one simple sentence what

highly Disciplined Leaders always do to achieve significant results. It became clear this book could be a unique opportunity to define what a Disciplined Leader is and provide insight into becoming one.

But I also realized there was a problem. While the subject of The Disciplined Leader certainly piqued people's interest, not everyone I spoke with was immediately in love with the idea of The Disciplined Leader because they weren't sure what I meant by "disciplined." This was understandable. Different perceptions about the concept of discipline exist, and many of them are anything but uplifting. For some of us, the very word discipline may conjure up ideas of punishment, whether emotional or physical memories or a combination of both. For others, it might remind us of a very specific, rigid experience with learning, perhaps one that included old-fashioned educational rigor, hands getting slapped by a ruler, perfect penmanship, remaining in control at all costs, and ascribing to a sort of God-like admiration for the teacher and principal—or else! Discipline may trigger memories of a particular religion or even an oppressive government.

As societal attitudes and norms associated with parenting, education, religion, government/politics, and lifestyles have changed over the past fifty or so years, the notion of discipline has evolved into something of a black sheep. For the purposes of this book, I want you to think of discipline in this more positive, supportive context: discipline is the consistent application of certain mindsets and actions that are vital for your success. It's closer to the Merriam-Webster definition, "an orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior," and it's rooted in a relentless commitment to "self-control" and great habits.

In business, the element of discipline is at the heart of an organization's success. That's a truism I noted in my professional experiences with Fortune 500 companies I worked with over thirty years, as well as something I've found in working with MAP throughout the past decade. Within these organizations, I've consistently witnessed how discipline, which must always start with a leader, accelerates the excellence of organizations.

That self-controlled, consistent adherence to certain mindsets and actions ultimately develops and drives the very best leaders and businesses.

However, because discipline is misunderstood or not as valued as it has been in even more recent decades, the United States—and some might argue the world—is experiencing a cultural leadership crisis. Simply talking about discipline in leadership just makes people anxious despite the alarming rate of business failure. Every month, more small businesses in the United States, defined as 500 or fewer employees, close than start up. Yet of those that make it beyond the first few years, half fold within five years while more than 70 percent fail within ten years, according to the Small Business Development Center and the U.S. Census Bureau. And one need only pay attention to media headlines to learn leaders of large corporations are struggling, too. Big brands, including Yahoo, Groupon, and Sears, are just a few of many that have not hesitated to replace their top leaders to remain in the game. Clearly, there's a great demand for the kind of discipline I've defined, and, most importantly, there's a critical need for leaders who honor and adhere to that discipline.

At MAP, we define The Disciplined Leader as someone who consistently excels at using the right mindset and actions to achieve results. This is done by "Focusing on The Vital Few" and ignoring or delegating The Trivial Many—a model for leadership that's based on the Pareto Principle. The Pareto Principle is commonly known as the "80/20 Rule." In MAP's fifty-four years of experience, we've learned The Disciplined Leader is someone who focuses on the 20 percent of activities that drive 80 percent of results under three core areas of leadership:

- 1) Leading yourself
- 2) Leading your team
- 3) Leading your organization

Within each of these core areas of leadership, The Disciplined Leader learns to identify The Vital Few. These become the 20 percent of habits and actions that will drive 80 percent of the results tied to their most precious asset—people.

The best leaders I've known all demonstrated excellent leadership characteristics (e.g., trustworthy, courageous, good communicators, etc.), some of which were stronger than others, depending on each leader's unique talents and abilities. But here's what these leaders all did well: they consistently disciplined themselves to focus on what really matters—again, people. They knew it was their people who were the driving force behind their products and services, so they learned to leverage that. What's more, these Disciplined Leaders stood out because their habits and practices aligned to their belief. And that made them exceptional.

Today, while there are many leaders who know deep down they should value this asset above all others, they don't do it. That's because their activities don't align with this mindset. Consequently, their habits and practices often tell a very different story about what they value most.

Case in point: Since 1960, MAP has helped accelerate sustained growth and development for over 15,000 organizations and 170,000 business leaders nationwide. When our consultants begin working with our clients, they often ask these leaders, "What is your business's most important asset?" Right on cue, they usually respond, "Our people." Most everyone gets it—people are *the* vital asset.

Then our consultants dig deeper: "What percent of your budget do you allocate to develop your people?" Silent, the clients usually respond with a wide-eyed stare. Breaking the awkwardness of the moment, the consultant next asks, "Well, how much are you planning to spend on products or equipment?"

At this point, most executives immediately pipe up, stating a specific number or at least a close estimate. They easily recall how much money they've allocated for the new phone system, facilities, computers, copy machines—the tangible things of business.

Again, the consultant says, "OK, you've got that down, so what's your most important asset?"

And this time, they get it. The point is all too clear: either they have no clue what they're spending on the development of their people, or the number is so small compared to expenditures for other business assets that it's rather embarrassing to confess it.

However, they soon learn they are not alone in their error or oversight. These professionals are representative of the many business leaders who, for countless reasons, underinvest in their people and their own leadership development. More importantly, there is a silver lining: making the commitment to shift priorities, putting people first, is something they can accomplish through commitment and focus.

Understanding this is a major factor in the success of many of MAP's clients. It is also a cornerstone to the MAP Management System<sup>TM</sup>, a proven management system that's grounded in engaging and aligning employees through discipline, accountability, and achievement.

As stated, The Disciplined Leader knows how to "Focus on the Vital Few" and ignore or delegate The Trivial Many. That's what I'm encouraging you to do so you, too, can become a Disciplined Leader, a model for leadership excellence. It may be tough, but call upon your willpower to stop, delegate, and ignore whatever is trivial and detracting from your ability to focus on your most critical asset—people.

#### How to Use This Book

Here in this book, you'll find fifty-two meaty tips to help you become The Disciplined Leader. The information is based on the collective wisdom of MAP's professional expertise and key client-consulting experiences. It is categorized into three parts, the core areas of leadership responsibility: leading yourself, leading your team, and leading your organization.

To get the most out of this book, read all the tips, using each part as a source to extract your "Top Three" Vital Few for each part. In other words, after you've read each of the three parts (or skimmed the chapter headlines and chosen a shorter

number to read), pick out the top three lessons that resonate most for you—what you know is really important in terms of developing and sustaining your leadership, your team, and your organization. At the end of this process, you should have nine Vital Few selected. From that list, we're going to challenge you to prioritize those nine to determine the "Top Five" Vital Few. These five will be the ones you want to take immediate action on once you finish this book.

To help, we've provided a *Vital Few Template* at the end of the Introduction. It will give you a place where you can record your "Top Three" Vital Few for each part and "Top Five" Vital Few for the book. Once you've identified your "Top Five," flip to those chapters and revisit the suggested action steps in relationship to the lesson you have learned, the habit that should be adopted, or the mindset you must embrace. Record those action steps (or add your own) into the template.

If we were coaching our clients, talking about the Vital Few needed to become The Disciplined Leader, we could easily pull from the guidance and solid insights offered from within the pages of this book. Hopefully, you will find value here, too. Use this book as a guide to help you learn your Vital Few and build effective leadership strategies to support those vital aspects of your leadership. What's offered here is a decades–proven process to transform you into The Disciplined Leader, a solution that provides critical, clear focus on what really matters.

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Figure 1 Vital Few Template

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Figure 1 Vital Few Template (continued)

#### Part I

# Where You Must Start

## The Responsibility to Lead Yourself

The journey to becoming a Disciplined Leader, one whose understanding and focus on The Vital Few drives the success of its people, must start with you. Before you make strides to impact your team and organization, it's part of your leadership responsibility to hold up the mirror and peer honestly and deliberately at yourself, reflecting on how you've led others.

You do that by examining your values and beliefs. You assess your traits that enhance or deflect from your leadership capabilities, paying attention to what you've been good at and not so good at in the past. You also recognize what you really cherish and are passionate about in your career and outside of work. You gain understanding of how your personal and professional lives interconnect and serve one another, and what the balance between the two look like at the end of the day.

Why go to all this effort? Because if you don't know these things about yourself and understand how they impact your ability to lead effectively, it will be impossible to understand how to make the right changes in your leadership—the ones

that inspire you, your team, and the organization as a whole to act and deliver results.

Some years back, I was managing a business unit with three hundred employees (including fifteen managers), working seventy-hour weeks, and overlooking the importance of caring for myself. I started skipping healthcare check-ups and missing routine appointments. I wasn't eating healthy and failed to exercise and get adequate sleep. All these oversights and bad habits started creating stress and wreaking havoc on my personal and professional life. I found myself exhausted and run down physically, emotionally, and mentally. Then, after a few back-to-back wake-up calls, I suddenly realized a powerful truth: If I wanted to succeed in both my personal and professional life, I had no choice but to change my ways. So I did, and it has made all the difference.

Now perhaps you're thinking this is just pure common sense. But how many of us have had times when we've put the business ahead of ourselves? Not caring for our self—ignoring the importance of health, fitness, and wellbeing—is indicative of that classic personal-professional imbalance.

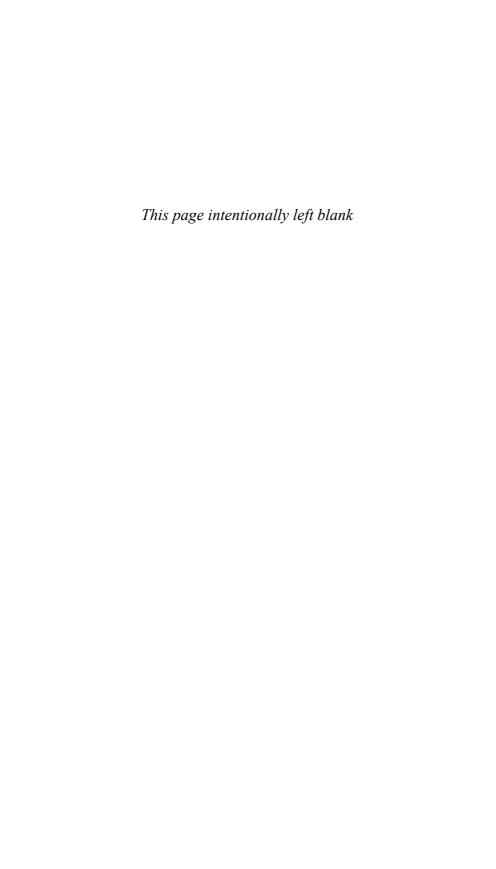
At MAP, we see this happening with leaders all the time—it's one of the most common reasons why company executives and managers suffer emotionally, mentally, and physically. The fallout then hurts everyone and everything in these leaders' paths.

But addressing this and other leadership "sins" of the self is easier said than done. It requires acute personal discipline, a fervent willingness to change, the ability to implement corrective action, and the relentless commitment to adopt new mindsets and habits.

Here, in this part, you'll find a collection of nineteen hearty tips that can stand alone and support you in your job to lead yourself. You're free to cherry-pick and read the ones that stand out to you initially if you wish. But if you can, read them all—start to finish, beginning to end. They are presented in a logical, sequential order, a sort of natural path of

inspiration, empowerment, exploration, challenge, and insight that aligns with practical, commonsense coaching. But you'll find that they all demand your attention because developing your own personal leadership is the bedrock upon which your other two leadership responsibilities are built. Your personal leadership competency is the base of everything else you do to lead your team and organization.

As outlined in the introduction, this book provides a process for helping you identify your Vital Few. So when you read through these tips, highlight those subjects that trigger emotion, spark a fire, or simply stand out because your gut is telling you it's time to work on them. Perhaps identify ten or fewer because at the end of the part, you'll then choose your "Top Three" Vital Few—those mindsets and habits you will focus on to accelerate your ability to lead yourself.





# Make the Commitment

Through life's lessons, you may have come to realize that when you are truly engaged in something, you naturally focus better and almost always achieve a greater outcome. You may have also noticed that your level of engagement for learning is significantly influenced by how you feel emotionally, mentally, and physically. When these aspects of you are in balance, you feel like you are on fire—nothing can stop you. Yet when things are misaligned, you're more prone to experience fear or failure, during which discord, imbalance, and even disease can rear their ugly heads and threaten to destroy the body-mind-spirit balance that's so critical to your well-being.

Change that results in personal growth and achievement is rewarding but rarely easy. For example, when I was very young, my mom enrolled me in swimming lessons at the local city center. To complete the class and be eligible for the next level of lessons, you had to swim the length of the entire pool without grabbing hold of the side. I failed miserably. In fact, I barely let go of the side of the pool during the whole ordeal and was one of just a few kids who didn't pass. Why? Even though I took

the lessons and did the work every week, I wasn't ready for the big test, and it reminds me of other times in my life when I started something but didn't hit my goal or finish it. Whenever that has happened, I've examined the root cause of my failures and realized I was the culprit. I wasn't *ready* for the challenges.

But that's not the end of the story. My mom reenrolled me in the same class, and the second go-round was a different experience. Well before I took my first lesson, I made a personal commitment to pass the test come hell or high water. I would lie in bed and picture myself reaching the other end of the Olympic-size pool and see my mom's approving smile. I didn't know it at the time, but I was creating a vision of success. I took the class again, and on the big day of the test, I achieved success! Now I have to admit, I dog-paddled the whole way. (I was the youngest kid in my class!) But this solution worked, and I achieved my goal.

The need to get engaged and make a commitment to change is something our clients must accept, particularly when beginning the process of improving their personal leadership. For example, we had a client at MAP who was the owner of a chain of family-style restaurants. He thought he could turn around his business by using only a few parts of the MAP program. But when he attended MAP's 2.5 day executive workshop, he realized the degree of change required, and only then did he fully commit to the right mindset and embrace the emotionally, physically, and mentally challenging work. Doing so became the catalyst to his successful leadership and business transformation.

I am confident that you have many similar stories about getting in the right mindset to make change happen. Making the commitment to learn something significant or new takes energy, focus, and determination. When you are not mentally ready to make changes, you find ways to resist them.

To get results, be fully present and get involved with this book's journey. In doing so, you will maximize the benefits of your time and effort. As you move through the lessons offered

here, check in with yourself and continually assess whether or not you are present and committed. If you're not, take action to correct the imbalance.

Here are some ways to stay on track:

Be mentally engaged. To make positive change, you've got to get in a positive mindset. Have you ever noticed that when you put your mind to some challenge, you can usually succeed? It's not an accident because success starts with the belief that you can reach your goal. Most leaders want to do a good job and want to be great at their responsibility to lead themselves—just like you. When you mentally commit and create focus, you can get it done. Adopt an "it's time to change" mindset, pushing out thoughts that will distract or deter you.

**Be physically engaged.** When you're feeling good physically, you have the ability to concentrate more and be more productive. If you want to maximize your leadership potential, it's critical to take care of your health and well-being. A regular routine for eating healthy meals, getting enough sleep, and exercising will help sustain a state of physical readiness.

Be emotionally engaged. Disciplined Leaders realize that they can't control everything happening around them but are conscientious about how they react and consistently choose the "higher ground." A perfect example of this was when George W. Bush received the 9/11 news while meeting in front of an elementary class in Florida. Realizing that he needed to maintain composure in front of these school children, who had no clue what the president had just learned, he generally appeared calm and let the children finish their presentation. Yet he obviously had the weight of the world on his shoulders. Bush and so many other leaders have been in countless situations in which they've disciplined themselves to maintain control over their emotional reactions.

You, too, have the ability to be in complete command of how you handle whatever is thrown your way. There are many things in life you can't control, so you must develop the ability to maturely manage your emotions. Of course, if you're physically and mentally alert, it will help with your emotional engagement as well. All of these elements tie together when we're talking about creating that state of engagement from which you can launch, commit to, and excel in leadership.

In Summary: The Disciplined Leader takes charge first with an inward focus. To become fully disciplined, balance and sustain your state of readiness on a physical and emotional level. Equip yourself with the physical energy and mental focus to optimize the disciplines put forth in this book. Be disciplined enough to overcome the fear of what those disciplines are—keep reading.

#### Take Action!

- ✓ Conduct a self-analysis of your life balance and identify areas that need focus and commitment. Consider all aspects: physical, knowledge, stress, life/work balance, and temperament under fire.
- ✓ Create accountability for improvement based upon your self-analysis. Develop a written plan to address what needs work and add deadlines for each activity in the plan.
- ✓ Start a daily journal to create focus and monitor progress on your plan.

Thank You For Reading

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