BE THE BOSS

EVERYONE WANTS TO WORK FOR

A GUIDE FOR NEW LEADERS

WILLIAM GENTRY

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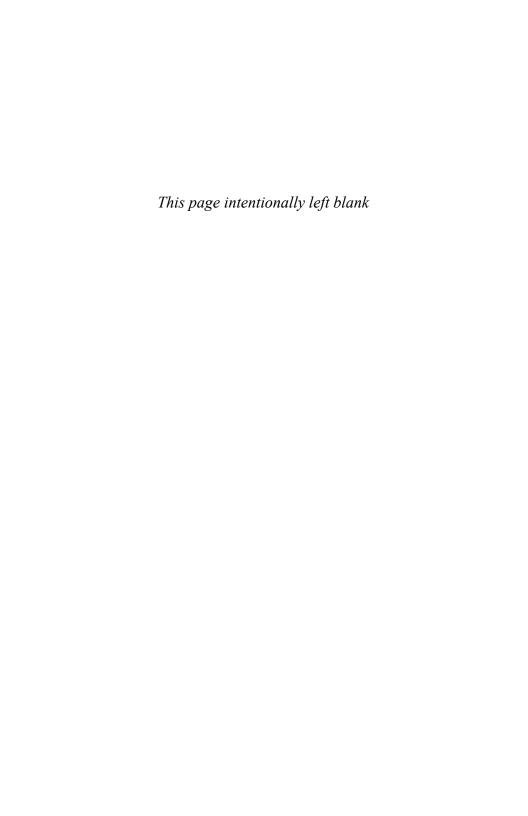
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"Every leader makes mistakes, but new leaders won't make nearly as many if they follow Gentry's advice. I wish a book like this, which explores the foundations of leadership in a highly engaging style, had been available early in my career!"

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"For smart, practical guidance on becoming a boss, there's no better authority than William Gentry. His insights are grounded in first-rate research and the realities of organizational life—and refined by his own experiences as an up-and-coming leader."
  —John R. Ryan, President and CEO, Center for Creative Leadership

"Get this inspiring book into the hands of all your new leaders—it will accelerate their growth and build the leadership bench for your entire organization."
  —Vice Admiral Cutler Dawson, US Navy (Ret.), President and CEO, Navy Federal Credit Union

"This book is a must-read for first-time leaders, or those aspiring to be leaders. It also serves as an invaluable reference for human resource professionals to develop their next generation of leaders."
  —Marcia J. Avedon, PhD, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Communications and Corporate Affairs, Ingersoll Rand, plc

"William's research-based insights, heartfelt personal examples, and simple framework for practical application ensure this book will become beloved by new managers and the folks who develop them alike."
  —Alison Smith, MSPOD, Vice President of Organizational Design and Development, Caribou Coffee and Einstein Noah Restaurant Group

"Drawing on both his own personal experience and a wealth of empirical research, William Gentry outlines how new leaders must 'flip their script' to succeed in their new role."
  —Kevin Kelloway, Canada Research Chair, Saint Mary's University

"William Gentry has provided an easily digestible framework for new managers that is backed by deep-dive research. There's no arguing with this book—it's thoughtful and data driven from beginning to end."
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"It's about time! Finally a down-to-earth, compassionate, actionable book for every new supervisor who has wondered, 'What have I gotten myself into?'"
  —Elaine Biech, author of *New Supervisor Training*, ATD Workshop Series

"Fortunately, it's never too late to make the six life-changing flips that William Gentry describes in this profoundly insightful book."
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BE THE BOSS EVERYONE WANTS TO WORK FOR

A GUIDE FOR NEW LEADERS

William Gentry, PhD

Center for
Creative
Leadership®

BK®

Berrett–Koehler Publishers, Inc.
a BK Business book

Be the Boss Everyone Wants to Work For

This book is dedicated to the 297 new leaders who were part of my research, the literally millions of entry-level and first-level supervisors, managers, and directors on the frontlines, and everyone who is, or is about to be, a new leader. You can be the boss everyone wants to work for.

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Introduction

The Biggest First in Your
Professional Career

Firsts. There are many "firsts" in our lives. First date. First kiss. First concert. First car. First album or CD (or MP3) you bought and listened to. First time leaving home. First time "with" someone, if you catch my meaning. First heartbreak. First child's birth. Think about these "firsts." I bet you remember a lot about those or other important "firsts" in your life.

Here's another "first"—your promotion into your first managerial role, the first formal leadership position you've ever had. All you've known in your career is work, work, work. And you were crushing it. The reward? You're a boss for the first time in your life.

Think about your own story. Do you remember when you heard the news and found out that for the first time in your life that you'd be leading others? How did it make you feel? Did you feel like this new leader, an engineer by trade?

Throughout your early years of employment, you always
questioned leadership. You continually asked questions like

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*"Why can't we do it this way?" or "What are they think-
ing?" or "Is it really that hard to just do it?" When you
become a leader, you'll quickly realize why these questions
aren't easy and why things were done a certain way. You'll
be in charge of employees, which is a great thing. But you
also have to answer to a different group, a group with
"grown-up" agendas, whose members know this business
inside and out. They may question whether they made the
right choice in promoting you. This group, which now
includes you, will lead the future of the company, and its
members have certain processes that need to be followed or
things don't happen. These processes are usually the answer
to why things are done a certain way, and as an individual
contributor you just didn't know all that was going on.*

*With all this said . . . I'm the youngest of a new
generation of leaders. Deep down, I know there is room
for improvement, that some processes could use a change.
Change happens for a reason, and I'm not afraid to be that
reason.*

Or maybe this new leader's story is more like yours:

*I was sitting in my vice president's office. It was a Friday. I
gave "the business case" for the raise I felt I deserved. Stating
how indispensable I was, how my skills were unique, and
presenting the evidence supporting the impact I made on
our department and the bottom line, it all worked like I
planned. Finally, I was going to get that raise I had been
asking for all this time. I never felt so vindicated. Then it
comes:*

*"You know, one of the key areas of focus for the
executive team in our organization is developing top*

talent. We've always thought that you'd be a great manager. You and I have talked about this before in passing, and you always said, 'Now's just not the right time.' But I really think that with this raise comes more responsibility. Isn't it time that you step up into a leadership role in our department?"

"Interesting," I said.

"We think you're ready," my vice president said. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Our department needs you, and our organization needs you. So, can you do it? We can sign the paper today, and we can make this official on Monday."

"Wow. This is huge. I'm flattered. It's definitely worth considering. But I have a question. I've never managed anyone before. Do you just expect that Friday I am a regular employee and Monday, magically, I'm a manager?"

I'm sure your story is unique, meaningful, and memorable to you. This person sounds sort of reluctant, realizing the magnitude of this "first" in his life. But maybe you're like most people, excited to jump right in and do it, like the engineer.

Having that supervisor, manager, or director title, or something similar, looks good on your business card, doesn't it? You should feel proud—it's a big deal. And as a new leader, you probably hope to be a great boss, a boss everyone wants to work for.

But what does that even look like?

Well, there are the "bigwigs" and "top dogs" of business, military, politics, religion, or sports you've admired. You might aspire to be them one day, so those are good examples. Or you've been lucky enough to have a great boss; that's a good

place to start. Of course, many of us suffered under horrible bosses (not too unlike the movie), so that tells us what we shouldn't do.

You have your own ideas on how to be a great boss. Don't you want to know how those ideas hold up to the facts?

Don't Believe the Hype

Let me set the record straight, and make this very, very clear. The boss everyone wants to work for is not a perfect, energetic, popular, animated, outgoing, gregarious, touchy-feely, audience-rousing, maverick of a rock-star celebrity who is the smartest in the room, everybody's friend, and is not just liked, but beloved by all. We might aspire to this, but think about it. The best bosses you worked for weren't all of those things, were they? Of course not. So, don't put that type of pressure on yourself.

They also aren't the all-knowing, godlike, self-admiring, self-involved, brownnosing, micromanaging, big-headed, rude, controlling, scream-at-and-threaten-people-to-get-the-work-done loners and jerks who talk a good game and say all the right things, with a win-at-all-costs attitude to boot. That's not the answer either.

The science I'll present and the stories you'll read describe how you can be the type of boss everyone wants to work for. It is possible. But with that may come different reactions. No doubt, you're eager to get on the fast track, and what a great way to start. Maybe you feel joy and acceptance, like you finally made it. Maybe you're scared. Yeah, you could feel some dread. The thought of you getting stuck with it may cross your mind too. But in the end, you know you deserved it. You think

you can master being a leader just as quickly as you mastered the work that got you promoted into leadership in the first place. The opportunity to change so many things at your organization for the better is there. And like any "first," you know as well as I do that you will never get a second chance at leading others for the first time in your life. You don't want to blow it. The pressure is on. Bring it.

Regardless of how you felt or under what circumstance you were promoted, I am willing to bet this: no matter what profession, function, or field you are in—working behind a desk, on the sales floor, or out in the field; working for the government, a not-for-profit, a Fortune 500 or otherwise; woman or man; young or old; in the United States, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, or any place in between—the reason behind your "I-just-got-promoted-into-management-for-the-first-time" story and experience is shared with almost every other new leader out there:

> *I was an individual contributor or professional who got promoted into my first managerial role because I am highly competent; I have a track record of exceeding expectations; I am damn good at what I do; and, much like a superhero in a movie, I have a very special set of skills that make me who I am.*

So maybe you have a particular set of skills. But as an industrial-organizational psychologist who studies and conducts research on effective as well as failed leaders, and as someone who designs and trains leadership development and executive education programs specifically for new leaders, one thing I've come to know is this:

Exceeding expectations and having a very special set of technical skills helps a person stand out from others and makes a high-performing employee, and possibly a kick-ass movie hero. It does not necessarily make a boss everyone wants to work for.

The Price of Being an Ineffective New Leader

It's funny that you were probably promoted into your first managerial role and became a boss due to your individual success, technical savvy, subject matter expertise, and smarts. Funny because all that and a Starbucks gift card will only get you a venti iced skinny hazelnut macchiato, extra shot, light ice, no whip, when it comes to leading others. Ironically, as a new leader, you can't rely on most of the things that got you that promotion into leadership in the first place. New leaders must do something much more substantial and, frankly, much more different from anything they've ever done before in their professional careers. It's probably why so many are struggling, even failing, in their new gigs as bosses. Each of us could probably talk about one right now or, worse, feel that way about ourselves. And the numbers would back these stories too. Consider the following findings over the past decade:

- Eighty-two percent of frontline leaders (where many new leaders are in organizations) are *not rated as "excellent"* in skills and capabilities as leaders.[1]
- Eighty percent of frontline leaders are *dissatisfied with the job they are doing as leaders*, and 70 percent of their senior managers agree.[2]

- Forty percent of newly promoted leaders *fail* within the first 18 months.[3]
- Fifty percent of managers are labeled as *incompetent*, a *disappointment*, a *wrong hire*, or a *complete failure* by their coworkers.[4]

Organizations are promoting those who have never led before into important leadership roles at entry- and first-level positions on the frontlines mostly due to their great technical skill, their subject matter expertise, and excellent performance. And the numbers say what many of us know firsthand: *New leaders on the frontlines are struggling, and it's hurting the people around them, their productivity, and their engagement.* Poor frontline leadership is the reason engagement programs are ineffective, and employees feel unhappy, uninspired, and less empowered.[5] Upward of 60 percent report a loss of engagement, productivity, and turnover when there is poor frontline leadership, and in fact, one out of four organizations report a loss of profit due to poor or ineffective frontline leaders.[6]

The Raw Deal of Becoming a New Leader

These stats and stories hide an important fact: New leaders get a raw deal. Actually, many of them get no deal at all. If you're a new leader reading this, odds are you probably know—and feel—what I'm talking about. According to a recent CareerBuilder survey,[7] almost 60 percent of new leaders receive *nothing* in formal training or development when they become a boss for the first time. Nothing. Just a "We can make this official on Monday" congratulations and an expectation that as soon as HR approves the promotion, they will

lead others just as effectively, if not better, than middle-to-senior-level executives who have had years of leadership experience. Or as one new leader told me when he became a boss for the first time:

> *I got a congratulatory handshake from my manager and this piece of advice as he walked away: "Now don't screw it up." That was the training and development I got as a new leader.*

Can you think of any occupation or job, any task or skill, any time when people take on something new that they've never done before and receive no training, no counseling, no orientation, or no prep work? With the added expectation that they excel right from the start? Would you put someone behind the wheel of a car, big rig, motorcycle, or airplane without months of proper training? There are orientation programs for new employees. There's marriage counseling for "nearly wed" couples. There's Lamaze class for expecting parents. In almost everything that you do, where something is about to happen that is "new" and unique and that you've never done before, or some part of your life is about to change, there is almost always something new to learn and some sort of support in place to help you understand what's going to happen to maximize your success.

And it's not that way for those of us new to leadership?

Ridiculous.

Becoming a leader for the first time in your life is no doubt one of the biggest psychological and emotional shifts you will ever experience in your career. It's totally different from what you do in your normal, everyday work as an individual contributor. It's inconceivable that you aren't getting any training,

development, or help, given your importance. You are part of the biggest population of leaders in organizations: entry- and first-level managers, supervisors, or directors on the frontlines. You are often regarded as the most important leaders to the long-term future of organizations. You directly supervise and lead more people than any other managerial level in organizations.[8] You often have the biggest impact on team productivity, employee engagement, and customer satisfaction.[9]

Yet so often nothing is done to help individual contributors transition into leadership when they've never led anyone before. And those fortunate few who actually do get help get way less in time and support than a mid-to-senior-level executive, who usually gets two to five times more development dollars than a new leader on the frontlines.[10]

And what's even more troubling? The pressure to make this transition quickly. I frequently ask people, "How many days does it take for you to finally conclude that a person promoted into his or her first managerial role failed in making the transition?" When I average responses, the answer comes out to a little over 20 weeks (143.8 days to be exact).

Ridiculous. And sadly, true.

You and other new leaders are getting a raw deal, as if you were being set up for failure before you even get started. That's why my passion is helping new leaders like you successfully transition into becoming the boss everyone wants to work for.

Why This Book?

I want to help new leaders by turning the research I conduct and know into practical, actionable content you can use now

in your leadership role. Whether you are on the fast track and about to be a boss for the first time; you just got promoted into leadership for the first time; or you've only been a boss for a few months, this book is for you. It is designed for the almost 60 percent of new leaders who get nothing when they become a boss for the first time, and to help others who received some training and development, but by no means the time, help, resources, and attention deserved.

But let's say you've had that supervisor, manager, or director title on your business card or LinkedIn profile for a while now. You've been a boss, but it's gotten old. Maybe you're one of those statistics; you never received the training and development to enhance your knowledge, skills, and abilities when you got promoted long ago. Even though I just said you never get a second chance to lead others for the first time, well, this is your golden ticket. This book can help you by giving you what you may have never received.

If you want to be more than that title on your business card and you want to step up your game, there's hope. This is your fresh start. You can be a new leader and the boss everyone wants to work for.

As you read this, there's probably some eye rolling. Hey, I get the potential hypocrisy in all of this. Writing about how to be the boss everyone wants to work for is so much different (and easier) from actually *being* that boss. It would be like someone who has never been a parent writing a book on parenting and expecting people to buy it, read it, recommend it, and for it to become a best seller. Anybody can write a book on leadership these days. Just include what people like to hear, sprinkle in some feel-good inspirational stories, anecdotes,

testimonials, and advice, right? You don't even have to be a leader to write such a book.

Although that could work, would you be willing to risk your success as a new leader on unproven opinion and advice that rarely has credible evidence to back it up? By those who may have never lived a day being a boss or can't even remember what it was like being a new leader?

I get how you feel, because I would feel the same. I'd be curious, hesitant, skeptical—maybe even a little cynical and critical. I get it because I am it: As I wrote this book, I got promoted into my first managerial role ever, as a director. One day I was a researcher, and I still consider myself to be a damn good one. But now I'm a new leader. In fact, that reluctant leader you read about earlier? That's me. Here's the rest of that story:

> *"Wow. This is huge. I'm flattered. It's definitely worth considering. But I have a question. I've never managed anyone before. Do you just expect that Friday I am a regular employee and Monday, magically, I'm a manager? . . . Plus, I'm writing a book for new leaders. If I take this director position, I won't have time to write the book, which means a lot to me. Being a boss takes up so much time. I train them and I've heard their horror stories. I know I've said it before, but I still feel the same: Now's just not the right time."*
>
> *"Well, don't you think it's the perfect time since you've done the research on what it takes to be a new leader?" My VP continued, "You can use your research to help yourself as a new leader. And your experience, along with the research and training you do, can help so many new leaders out there who'll read the book. That's a win–win for everyone."*

I'm not saying I was "guilted" into taking the position. But my VP used my own research and passion to help new leaders and those who deserved to get help but never did when they stepped up into leadership, to persuade me to take the position. And it worked. That's why I think this book, more than any other out there right now, is so uniquely positioned to help you and other new leaders. I use research, best practices, my experience training new leaders, and stories from the frontlines (including my own) to persuade, educate, move, challenge, and inspire you as a new leader your first time out, or this time around, to be the boss everyone wants to work for. I want this book to help you transition from acting as a successful individual contributor and technical expert to thinking and behaving like a leader.

So how is this book any different from the thousands of other books on leadership? Because it delivers the triple threat: science, practice, and art. I research new leaders. I train them. I *am* one of them.

The Science: I Research Them

I'm a quant-geeky researcher—I admit it. I'm an industrial-organizational psychologist, and proud of it. I love research and have a passion for using it to help convince leaders what to do (and not do). Particularly new leaders. The scientific research I provide in this book is either tested over time or is the newest and best out there. In fact, my latest research examines almost 300 new leaders for the sole purpose of this book. What you'll read is customized to help new leaders and those on the frontlines. So, if you need reasons why you should do things to be the boss everyone wants to work for, they're

not based on my opinion. It's the science and research that will tell you why.

But I promise, you won't find a bunch of statistics, equations, and correlations here (I know that's a relief; no offense taken). What you will find are insights separating fact from fiction, from my knowing and doing the research and all the reading and writing of academic articles, blogs, and tweets that come with it. You will clearly understand what the research means for new leaders and what to grab from it.

The Practice: I Train Them

I've had opportunities to train other, more seasoned leaders. But I have a place in my heart for new leaders and managers working on the frontlines. They are so important to the success of organizations and impact the lives of so many people. And as I said, it's ridiculous that they don't get the help and support they deserve.

From my experience designing and training programs specifically for new and frontline leaders, I feature these best practices, based on good science. In this book, you have the best knowledge at your fingertips and the answers to many questions new leaders often have. Some will be quick and easy fixes; others are more difficult and will take time. All are applicable to you, and can be used in the moment, or as part of long-term developmental plans to help you succeed.

The Art: I Am Them

Science explains why. Practice says what. But one of the best ways I've found to understand and help you and other new

leaders be effective is the how. *How* do you do this "leadership thing" anyway? *How* do you apply the science and the practice? The only way is to speak from the successes, mistakes, and experience of actually being a leader. That's the how. That's the art. And it is all detailed in this book.

Unlike most new leaders, I knew exactly what I was getting into, based on my research and from the hundreds of new leaders I've trained. That's why I was so hesitant. I knew it would be difficult before I even started. Being a boss for the first time in your life is not as glamorous as everyone thinks. At times, it's thankless.

I totally sympathize and empathize with every single new leader out there. I've felt and experienced what you'll likely go through or what you've already faced. You can't rely on the technical skills that got you promoted. Dealing with people more than you had to (or wanted to) before may be demanding. Letting go of the work that you loved doing can leave you confused, frustrated, or threatened. It's awkward and uncomfortable at times. You get angry. You sometimes feel alone and lost. Doubt starts to creep in. You start second-guessing yourself. There are times you don't feel very bright—maybe even feel like you're on the verge of total failure. You feel no one really "gets" you and your situation.

But I do. I've felt all those things.

But there's the flip side as well. As a new leader, you can make a difference in the lives of others and your organization. You help people set, meet, and even exceed their goals and expectations. You can inspire others to greatness. That sense of a "win" when your team helps others, develops the next big innovative product, or lands that whale of a client is exhila-

rating. I know how valuable you can be to the people you lead and serve.

As a boss promoted into his first leadership position ever, I'm right there with you, and that's one of the main reasons why I wanted to write this book. I wanted to help all new leaders out there get it right this time, with stories backed by sound, reliable evidence and advice that is tried and tested. But whatever you do or however you feel—frustrated, worried, apprehensive, afraid, overwhelmed, or worse, thinking that "I can't do this"—I truly believe you can be the boss everyone wants to work for. There is a way. Just follow this one main idea in everything you do as a leader: Flip your script.

Flip Your Script So You Won't Flop as a Boss

This book provides one overarching theme for new leaders to be the boss everyone wants to work for: *Flip your script.* I believe you can truly be the boss everyone wants to work for if you are willing to flip your script.

First, let's be clear on what a script is. Think about a play, musical, movie, or television show you've watched. It was scripted. It used written text to guide the performance. And you know those scripts; you can spot them a mile away in romantic comedies, Shakespearean plays, Greek tragedies, thrillers, or dramas. You could probably write the script about these people: the third wheel; the bridesmaid who is never the bride; the party-like-a-rock-star, wicked-funny, good-looking hero; the devious villain; the jock; the nerd who gets the girl in the end; the wallflower who was beautiful all along. These people do what they are supposed to do, act the way they are supposed to act, and live the way they are expected to because of the scripts that are written for them by writers.

But scripts aren't just for jocks, nerds, villains, heroes, and heroines on stage and screen. We all have scripts in our lives.

In your own life, you write your own script and live your life based on what your script says about the various roles you have: parent, child, partner, spouse, sibling, community activist.

Your script helps you understand who you are and how to live. It's what is expected of you. When you write your own script, you provide details about how you are supposed to think; what you are supposed to do; how you should act, feel, relate with others; how you should view the world; and how you should view yourself. Scripts help us understand our roles and our purpose.

The Individual Contributor Script and a Breakup Line

At work, you definitely live by a script. Oddly enough, the script of a successful individual contributor reminds me a lot of that old breakup line many of us have used—or, like me, heard all too often—when someone's about to get dumped. You know the one: "It's not you; it's me."

So what does that breakup line have to do with the script of an individual contributor, you may ask? Well, have you ever noticed where the spotlight and center of attention is when someone uses that "It's not you; it's me" breakup line?

Not you. Me.

No doubt, many successful individual contributors and technical experts shine the spotlight, not on "you," but on "me, myself, and I" to get success. The script usually goes something like this:

Keep my head down. Work harder than everyone else. Push to get things accomplished. Rely on my technical skill,

knowledge, resourcefulness, and unparalleled effort to get ahead. Do my job and do it well. That's how I will separate myself from everyone else and become a subject matter expert and well respected at work. That's how I get rewards and recognition. That's how I will get ahead.

The script is the reason individual contributors get promoted into their first managerial role:

I got promoted to my first managerial role because of my dedication, my drive, my initiative, my work ethic, my technical skills, and the accomplishments I made that directly contributed to the success of the team and organization.

It's all about "me, myself, and I" as an individual contributor. That "me" mentality is at the heart of the script of individual contributors, technical experts, and professionals everywhere. And we've been living this script ever since we can remember, even as kids, to get ahead, to get attention, to outshine everyone. Focusing on "me" and "my" talents, knowledge, efforts, and unique set of skills and abilities brought awards, accolades, recognition, and approval. It made us successful in our educational endeavors and in extracurricular activities. And at work, that's how we became valuable and successful individual contributors, subject matter experts, and well-known professionals in our organization, if not more broadly.

The script works, and there's nothing wrong with it for individual contributors and technical experts. And because the script worked for us before, we think it should work as new leaders. Why wouldn't it? Like the saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

But here's the problem. Many times in life, the situation changes, and we neglect to alter our scripts to be successful in that new situation. So we keep living that same script each and every day, not knowing that it just doesn't work. That's why I think many new leaders stumble from the start. What so many new leaders have come to know (oftentimes too late to do anything about it) is that success in that new boss role is no longer defined by "It's not you; it's me."

Yes, the script for an individual contributor ain't broke. But it won't work for a new leader. The script of a boss that everyone wants to work for is different.

So What Must You Do? Flip Your Script

The script for individual contributors is all about "me" and "my" own abilities, achievements, technical expertise, and personal desire to get ahead. That's not necessarily a bad thing; having ambition and seeking personal excellence are worthy traits. It's perfectly normal for us to be motivated to succeed and do well in life. It's the reason individual contributors were promoted into leadership in the first place.

But to be a successful leader, to transition from a technical expert to a leader of people, you must be willing to shed the "individual contributor" role that got you the promotion to leadership in the first place and stop shining the spotlight on "me, myself, and I." You must want to change, truly believe that you can change, and be 100 percent committed to change. Actually, strike the word *change*—*flip* is a better word than *change*. You must want to *flip*, truly believe that you can *flip*, and be 100 percent committed to *flip your script*. I believe you

can truly be the boss everyone wants to work for, if you are willing to do this.

So what does "flip your script" mean?

Well, you know the script of an individual contributor. It's like that old breakup line: "It's not you; it's me."

To be the boss everyone wants to work for, flip it:

"It's not about me anymore."

Flip your script from "me" to "we." Flip from a "me mentality" to putting attention on "we" and "us."

It sounds so simple, doesn't it? Maybe too simple. But you know as well as I do, it's so difficult to do. Just look around. So many of us see (and work with) leaders who haven't flipped their scripts, like this one:

> *Lee, sales are down 15 percent this month. You know I pride myself on being at the top. I always was when I was in your shoes, not too long ago. So buckle down. Work harder. Call more people. In fact, that sales lead call you have in ten minutes? I'll sit in, and you introduce me to Ms. Oakes—that's her name, right? And then I'll take over and show you how it's done. I had to do the same thing with Vicki earlier today too. Do I need to remind you of all the incentives we'll get if we meet the targets I set? I am not going to have my meeting with Mr. Scott and tell him I missed our group's goal the very first quarter I took over sales.*

That old script—that relentless determination to complete work, reliance on technical savvy, being a subject matter expert, that focus on "me," to get rewards, recognition, and impress others—is nowhere in the script of a new leader who wants to be the boss everyone wants to work for.

So what would it look like if that new leader flipped his script? Maybe something like this:

> *Lee, I've noticed sales are down 15 percent this month in the reports. What's your opinion on why? . . . Hmmmm, I didn't know there was a process issue. And it's affecting others on our team too? So what do you think could be done? . . . Lee, that's a great idea. Can you write a memo detailing your thoughts, clearly showing how your idea can better our sales? I'll be sure to tell Mr. Scott and mention that you came up with this great idea. And that call with Ms. Oakes in ten minutes—is there anything I can help you with? No? Well, I know you've got this, I have confidence in you. Afterward, let's have a 15-minute debrief and talk about the call, what went well, and what you learned from that call that will help you in future calls, okay?*

That's the type of boss everyone wants to work for, a boss who flipped his script.

Clearly, the situation has changed now that you are the boss. As a new leader, your script is much different from the script of an individual contributor, the script that you've lived your entire life, the script that made you successful and got you the leadership position. It's no longer about being better than others, about what "I" can do, "my" technical savvy, abilities, expertise, knowledge, and ability to get all the work done, proving "my" worth. Realize that the biggest driver of any new leader's success is not about "me" anymore. Make others—your staff, your team, the people you lead and serve—successful and help them fulfill their potential.

This is your wake-up call to stop living the "It's not you; it's me," script. Flip your script from "me" to "we," and embrace

"It's not about me anymore." Flip from being the center of attention to shining the spotlight on others.

Flipping your script is a huge idea, a big deal. It goes against every normal and natural instinct you may have. It's so different from everything that has made you successful up to this point in your career. But leading others is so different from anything you've ever done before.

It's difficult to do. So don't take it for granted. The chapters of this book will help you with six parts of the script you must flip in order to be the boss everyone wants to work for.

Chapter 2: Flip Your Mindset

You'll realize how to avoid derailing at such an early point in your career (and later in life too). Based on my latest research of almost 300 new leaders, this chapter will help you flip your mindset to start thinking like a new leader.

Chapter 3: Flip Your Skill Set

Individual contributors rely on their technical skill to do their job and get ahead. That's their script. But many new leaders struggle because (1) they rely too much on technical skills that a boss clearly does not need, or (2) they were never told what skills they needed to be successful leaders in the first place. Through my latest research, I've identified four skills that new leaders often struggle with the most. So flip your skill set. You'll read about *communication* and *influence* in this chap-

ter. *Leading teams* and *developing others* come in the next two chapters.

Chapter 4: Flip Your Relationships

As a new leader, your relationships are different. For instance, your former peers—some possibly being your friends—now report directly to you. Plus, you actually lead a staff or a team of people. In this chapter, you'll understand the relationship aspects of leading others.

Chapter 5: Flip Your "Do-It-All" Attitude

To be the boss everyone wants to work for, it's not about doing all the work anymore. As a boss, you'll flip your script in the way you define, think about, and conduct work, which includes developing others.

Chapter 6: Flip Your Perspective

Individual contributors usually have a narrow view of the organization. As a new leader, flip your perspective and expand your view. Here, you'll understand what "politics" really is. Plus, you'll gain the awareness and ability to navigate the politics inherent in your organization through your political savvy, including "managing up" and working in a matrix.

Chapter 7: Flip Your Focus

New leaders must understand that their actions and decisions can have repercussions far beyond themselves. So, flip your

focus. You'll appreciate the importance of integrity, character, doing the "right" thing, and building trust, now and as you climb up the organizational ladder.

Chapter 8: Stick with Your Flipped Script

Finally, Chapter 8 will help you stick with your flipped script to be the boss everyone wants to work for.

That's a lot to take in, I admit. If you think about it, there are entire books on the topics each chapter presents. To make it manageable and easier for you to flip your script, I'll provide a couple big takeaways in each chapter. You can put that information to work immediately, and you'll have opportunities to continue your learning (along with some exclusive content, more tips, and several other answers to the old "Just tell me what I have to do" appeals) in "The Coach's Corner" at the end of each chapter and on the companion website (www.WilliamGentryLeads.com).

And know this: you don't have to take on flipping your entire script all at once. Like one of my mentors says, "You don't have to try and swallow the entire ocean." After reading the book, you'll know the one or two areas you can start to flip (and "The Coach's Corner" and companion website will help out a lot too). You can be the boss everyone wants to work for, and this book will show you how. Flip your script.

The Fine Print. Or "This Book Isn't for You If . . ."

With all that being said, here's "the fine print" that you must read. Here are four not-so-subtle points you should consider before reading the rest of the book. Warning: Myths will be

shattered. If any of these describe you, return the book and get your money back.

Point 1. If You Believe Leaders Are Born, Not Made, This Book Isn't for You

It's an easy cop-out: "I wasn't born a leader, so I'll never be a leader." That excuse is no longer acceptable. And it wasn't even true to begin with. No matter who told you or what you've heard, being born into leadership is not necessary to be the boss everyone wants to work for. Science actually debunks that old adage "Leaders are born, not made"—it's total garbage, or at least 67 percent garbage. The scientific study of genes and leadership[1] exposes that, at the most, one-third of leadership is born. That means two-thirds is made. Even my own research at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) uncovered that a majority of top leaders of organizations around the world think leaders are more made (i.e., can be developed) than they are born.[2] (This is just one example of how I am going to use science and research to help you flip your script and be the boss everyone wants to work for. See? That wasn't so bad.)

And if science isn't enough, just look around your own organization or consider the people you know in the world. Granted, most of us will never be president, admiral, general, superintendent, or CEO. No matter if these positions are on your radar or not, you don't need to have credentials the length of your arm, come from privilege, or have the necessary "genes" to be the boss everyone wants to work for. So many of us are underdogs who can rise up through the ranks, without privilege, money, or fame, and become great leaders. You

shouldn't feel leadership is impossible, that you'll never be able to get this "leadership thing" because you're not famous, not a one-percenter, or not at the top of your class. You shouldn't feel that because you aren't a born leader, you'll never have the chance to be one. And if people are telling you that, buy another copy of this book and show them, or use it to hit them over the head with it (okay, bullying probably isn't the answer, as you'll read in Chapter 2). So, first, if you firmly believe that leaders are born, not made, this book isn't for you.

Point 2. If You Expect That Transitioning into Leadership Will Be Easy, This Book Isn't for You

If there were some magical "if X, then Y" flowchart that worked 100 percent of the time, or if there were an app that guaranteed success in each and every situation you encounter as a new leader, I would give it to you. But when you lead others, easy fixes are rare and more likely than not, difficult. However, it can be rewarding. So, second, recognize that it is hard to flip your script. It will take effort but will be so worth it in the end. However, if you think you'll breeze right through with no sweat, this book isn't for you.

Point 3. If You Are Afraid to Make Mistakes, This Book Isn't for You

It's a cliché and it's true: We all make mistakes. We all have things we should work on. When you flip your script, allow yourself to make mistakes. Be vulnerable. Research professor Brené Brown studies and speaks about the importance of being vulnerable and how it can help you lead an authentic life

(check out her powerful 2010 TEDx Houston talk on You-Tube[3] and her various books, such as *Daring Greatly*[4]). Here's one story of a new leader being vulnerable, admitting faults, weaknesses, and imperfections:

> *I remember an assessment that my coworkers took to rate me in terms of how effective I was in different areas of leadership. Yeah, I gave myself some 3s, just to keep my ego in check. But mostly 4s and 5s. Then I got the data from my coworkers. At first I was surprised. Then I became angry. Then I was very hurt. I felt like a total failure. Getting a 1 or a 2 on "communication," or "delegating," or "resolving conflict" is not enjoyable to see, particularly when I thought I was doing rather well in those areas, especially communication—it's a major portion of my research! How can I be horrible at something that I study and write so much about?*

That new leader is me. Clearly, I'm not perfect at leading others. Neither was the engineer I mentioned earlier. The nearly 300 new leaders in my research who are the foundation of this book, or others you'll read about, are not perfect. Neither is your boss. Even the most successful leaders who have made it to the top of organizations or their fields were not perfect. You don't need to be either.

Though you'll read a lot of success stories, many times you learn even more from your mistakes, weaknesses, hardships, vulnerabilities, and even failures. Our research over decades at CCL says hardships and failures help make leaders who they are today.[5] I will be sharing the challenges, weaknesses, mistakes, and failures of new leaders I have studied and trained, and my own shortcomings, failures, and lessons learned. Let these stories help you navigate being a

new leader or help you rectify any recent mistakes you've made as a boss.

All of us make mistakes. We oftentimes fail. But the best leaders learn from them. And in fact, those mistakes and failures some may see as a strength, as in this comment about one of the best performing new leaders in my study:

> *One of his strengths? He admits his own failures and weaknesses. That lets his team know it's okay to do the same.*

Perfection is not a prerequisite to be the boss everyone wants to work for. Allow yourself to be less than perfect. Allow yourself to make mistakes and learn from them. Allow yourself to be vulnerable; it may actually help you. But if you can't, this book isn't for you.

Point 4. If You Don't Want to Flip Your Script, This Book Isn't for You

Finally, it's like I tell all the new leaders I train:

> *I can't guarantee you will succeed. But those who are successful—they wanted it. They believed they could flip their script. You can come to CCL or any other prestigious place in the world to get leadership development, to get the best training money can buy. But if you are unwilling to flip your script, if you don't see the point, all the training in the world will not work. Just like the research shows, you have to want to flip your script and believe you can do it.*

Well-known theories on motivation, self-efficacy, goal setting, and control, as well as tons of research, all reiterate that

if you want to flip your script, you can. But you must be willing to shed the "individual contributor" role that got you the promotion to leadership in the first place. You must value flipping your script, clearly see how flipping your script will positively affect outcomes important to you, see yourself able to do it, and have support from others.

The glue that holds this book together, every single research-based tip, tool, and piece of advice I provide in this book and elsewhere, all of it is based on one single thought: *flip your script.*

So, anytime you are in a situation and wonder, "What should I do?" ask yourself:

> *Have I flipped my script? Am I looking out for "me" and putting "me" in front of everyone else? Or have I truly flipped my script and realize, "It's not about me anymore?" Is it truly less about "me" and more about "we" now? Is more time being invested on getting things "I" want, or on helping others—my direct reports, staff, team, coworkers—develop and grow and getting something we all want?*

More times than not, you won't go wrong being the boss everyone wants to work for if you flip your script. Leaders are great when they want others to succeed, when they realize, "It's not about me anymore," and when they think less about "me" and more about "we."

Looking back, taking the promotion into leadership was actually a fortuitous coincidence when writing this book. Even though I knew what I was getting myself into, being a new leader was invaluable in writing this book for new leaders. Let the science, practice, and art I describe and present in this

book give you a solid foundation to understand why, what, and how to be the boss everyone wants to work for.

It's time for you to flip your script. If you truly believe that you can, are 100 percent committed to flipping your script, and want to be the boss everyone wants to work for, this book is for you. Read on, and get ready to flip your script.