Scoring Four-Way Wins with Total Leadership in Your Organization

This book is about how the Total Leadership program can benefit individuals. Similarly, in your organization a Total Leadership program can improve performance, satisfaction, and alignment in employees’ four life domains. As a result, your organization will increase its innovativeness and competitiveness, improving talent retention, and reducing health-care costs.

Your organization is your employees. The Total Leadership program provides a framework, a language, and a motivation for making positive change on every organization level. It can result in people applying more of their energy focused on the pursuit of business goals, thereby improving morale, boosting efficiency, increasing resilience, fostering collaboration, and making work more engaging.

It’s possible to achieve these aims in any kind of organization, of any size and in any setting. However, the means for doing so depend on how deeply felt is the need for change and the readiness of key decision makers to cultivate grassroots experimentation.

Just as no two participants take the same course through Total Leadership, no two organizations do either. In every Total Leadership program, the outcomes differ because the raw material—you, your organization—is never the same. The key to achieving four-way wins systemwide is to apply the same basic principles described in this book to your organization.

Be Real

The process starts with knowing what’s important, being real about your organization’s aspirations. Whether the idea is first seeded by a frontline employee who’s read this book or a CEO who heard about it from a friend at a cocktail party, at some point—sooner is better than
later—top management must have an honest dialogue about what it takes to invest in experimenting with four-way wins.

Just as individuals embarking on a Total Leadership journey naturally feel some ambivalence, there will be resistance in your organization. But the business case isn’t hard to make, because the main purpose is mutual gain for all key stakeholders. First and foremost in the conversation, then, must be the understanding that the Total Leadership method is not about trading business success for satisfaction in life outside of work but about experimenting with ways of demonstrably improving business results and in other parts of life. It does not involve radical and wholesale programmatic shifts in HR policy but, rather, incremental, data-driven, trial-and-error learning, which is less threatening and much easier to manage.

Be Whole

Achieving four-way wins is a sustainable and sustaining goal because it directly addresses the need for integrity, or wholeness, in a person’s life. The practice of my Total Leadership method is a creative search for ways to meet the expectations of all key stakeholders, in all domains. It’s the same for organizations. A successful Total Leadership program explicitly respects the interests of various constituencies: employees and their families, owners, managers, customers, clients, suppliers, local communities, society, and the environment.

Because the experiments conducted by organization members—following a serious consideration of stakeholder expectations—must address their four domains, the impact of these experiments accumulates; in a variety of ways throughout an organization, people design and implement experiments to make things better for all of an organization’s stakeholders. When disseminated throughout an organization, therefore, a Total Leadership program is not only a
means for performance improvement and skill building, it is an opportunity to demonstrate corporate social responsibility, in a way that is meaningful for each organization member.

Be Innovative

Intelligent, low-risk experiments are the central activity of the Total Leadership process. The long-lasting takeaway from the process, after all, is that participants become better at creating and implementing productive change. When you have many people undertaking this effort in your organization, you produce a cultural context that sends a message of support for continual innovation, so long as you keep in mind that what might seem new and challenging for one group might seem conventional and simple to others. Indeed, this is a critical success factor: don’t judge too harshly whether another’s experiment is worthwhile.

The hardest part is just getting started. That’s why the best approach is to run a pilot program and surround it with data collection about what’s working and what must be adjusted to make it work better. A pilot is low-cost and low-risk—a small-wins approach to large-scale change. Once you’ve got a group of employees who’ve done their own experiments, you are on your way to spreading knowledge and a new way of thinking about leadership development and work/life integration in your organization because now you’ve got people who can tell credible stories about real change.

One example comes from Lehman Brothers, a global investment bank, which recently launched a pilot program—called Four-Way Wins—with a group of midlevel managers in its New York headquarters to promote the ideals of Total Leadership. The impetus behind the program came from Lehman Brothers’ commitment to evolving the culture in its Investment Banking Division to promote sustainable high performance and resilience over time. This
commitment was reinforced by Lehman Brothers’ president and chief operating officer, Joe Gregory, who, driven by his own awareness and urgency to create a new leadership mindset, joined the participants' debrief of the pilot program to explore the Four-Way Wins model.

Participants' managers attended the session to discuss the results of the initial experiments and lessons learned from them. Though some participants were unable to complete successful experiments, a significant number of them did, producing demonstrable gains. Participants and their managers talked about dealing with obstacles to change, defined conditions for success, and brainstormed ideas for providing further support for the next wave of program participants.

Most importantly, the successful experiments built credibility and momentum for ongoing dialogue and forward movement, proving that four-way wins are possible even in a very intense work environment. Recognizing that practical adjustments in work methods can yield better results for the individual and for the business, Lehman Brothers’ co-chief administrative officer, Scott Freidheim, and its global head of Investment Banking, Skip McGee, continued to drive progress forward.

The overriding message from the top was this: We expect you to try new ways of getting things done and we will actively support your initiatives to do so. The pilot program, itself a smart experiment, paved the way for increased focus on the importance and feasibility of improving the quality of employees' lives outside of work while improving their performance at work, even for those who hold extremely demanding jobs.