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FEATURE

Total Leadership:
Improving Performance
in All Parts of Life

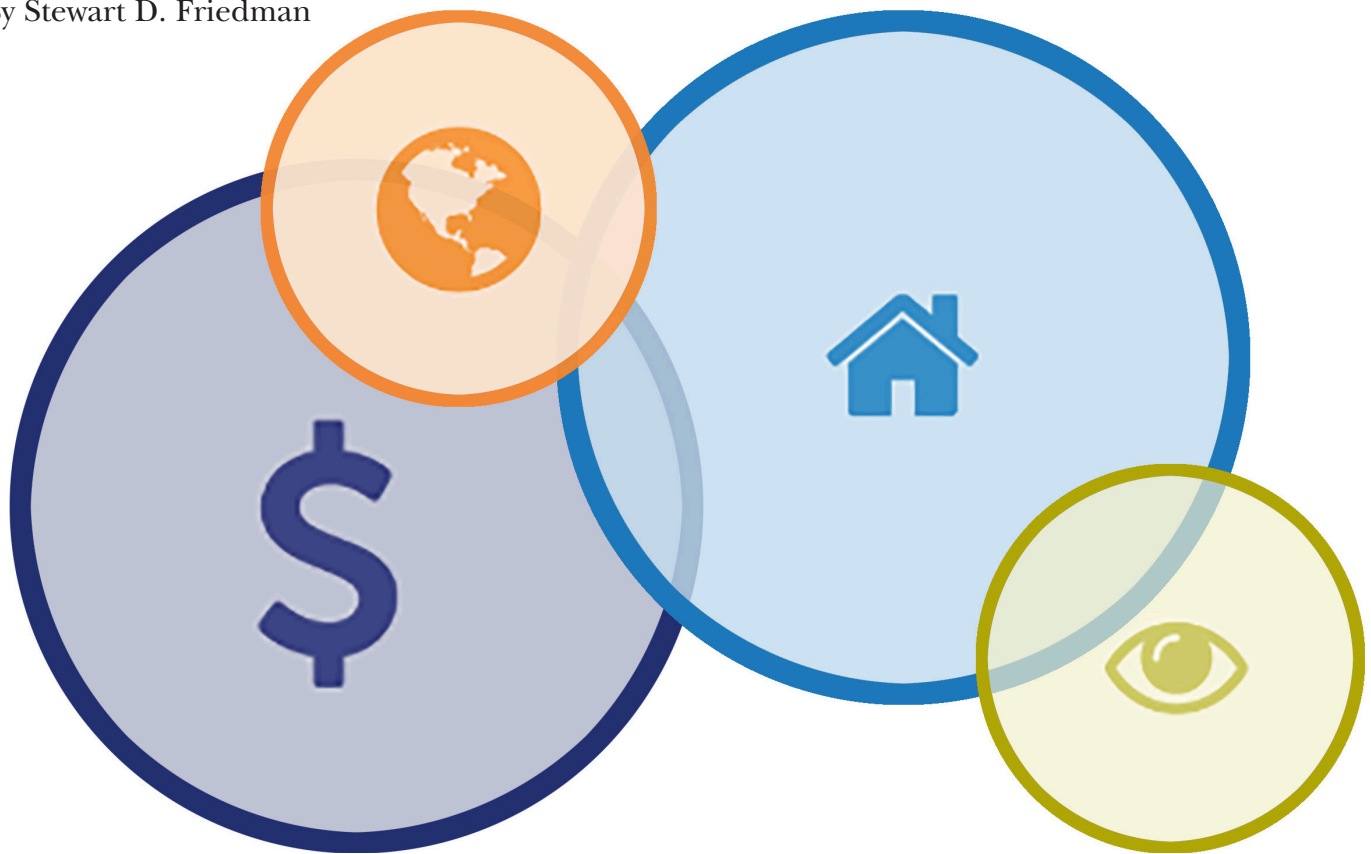
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Total Leadership: Improving Performance in All Parts of Life

By Stewart D. Friedman



You can be a committed A-player, a good parent, an attentive spouse, and a healthy person with time for community engagement *and* hobbies. How? Stop trying to juggle—it’s *not* about balance—and start integrating. Pursue harmony among the different parts of life to improve performance in all of them while enhancing your leadership skills.

Start with a clear view of what you want from—and can contribute to—each domain of your life (work, home, community, and self). Carefully consider the people who matter most to you and the expectations you have for one another. Then experiment quickly with some incremental changes and see how they affect all four domains. If an experiment doesn’t work out in one or more areas, make adjustments or put an end to it, and little is lost. But if it does work out, it’s a small win. Rack up enough of them and you’re well on your way to a life that’s less stressful and more productive.

Skeptical? Many people are when they first hear about the Total Leadership approach. But time and again I’ve seen maxed-out professionals use it to find the greater harmony they’re seeking. To show what it looks like in practice, here are stories from executives at Target who have experimented their way toward improving their wellbeing and performance.

Manage Boundaries

David is a VP accountable for a multibillion-dollar P&L. (All names and titles are disguised.) For years, he felt a relentless tension between work and family. “I spent most of my waking hours at work,” he explains, “and I always shut down from work at home.” But keeping things separate like this hurt his relationship with his wife. They talked about the kids, nothing more, because that was all they had in common. And at work, David never had enough time to prepare for all his meetings.

So he devised an experiment. Before leaving the office each day, he’d look at the next day’s schedule and pick one big meeting to get ready for. On his drive home—at a decent hour—he’d think about what he could do and say at that meeting. When he got home, he’d run some ideas by his wife.

It worked beautifully. “This gave us something new to talk about each day, it gave her a much better understanding of what I do, it engaged her, and it enhanced our relationship because we were having richer conversations. My wife made good suggestions—and I’ve had better meetings as a result.”

This, and another experiment he tried, had a positive effect on David’s team. After telling his direct reports he was changing his hours in the office, one of them approached

him with a request to adjust her schedule, because it was aggravating a medical problem she had. Another employee said he felt empowered to spend time with his family during the day when he needed to, to take care of an aging parent, because David's own actions made it clear that it was OK—he didn't need to feel guilty about it.

"The example I was setting before was work first, work first, work first," David reflects. "Now I might be in the office for fewer hours, but I'm making faster and better decisions. And my wife has more understanding when work does have to come first. In the long-term, this means that I'm a more engaged leader for Target without an unmanageable tension between my wife and my work."

Be the Change

Changing old run-yourself-ragged norms isn't easy. But by modeling new behavior, senior executives at Target are accelerating a wellbeing movement. Take Joan, who now runs the company's largest P&L business. She admits she "saw a couple of eyebrows raised" when she first told her team that she comes in late two mornings a week so she can "go to the gym and have breakfast with my kids." Joan started this pattern as an experiment and she kept it up because it was effective, not only by more closely connecting her to her family but also by noticeably improving her focus and performance at work.

David also finds this to be true. His boss supports his experiments and asks for regular updates on them. "She's also given me tips and shared what she's learned in her experience," he says. "I talk to her about all this to hold myself accountable. She's reminded me that each new job in my career will be bigger and more demanding, so it's critical to get better and better about managing my commitments as I continue to develop."

When senior leaders in an organization take highly visible steps to reduce stress *and* improve performance (as David, Joan, and their managers and others at Target have done), employees feel more free to generate experiments of their own. Slowly, the culture changes as people at all levels discover it makes good business sense to take care of all the things that matter in their lives.

The Total Leadership Experience

Total Leadership is a novel synthesis of ideas that have emerged from two traditionally separate fields: the study of leadership and the study of how individuals can find harmony among the different parts of their lives. It's an approach for developing leadership *and* it offers a proven method for integrating work and the rest of life. It is designed to work for anyone at any organizational level and in any career stage, for anyone who senses they are succeeding in one aspect of life while under-performing in the others, or living with too much conflict among life's different roles.

Total Leadership seeks what I call "four-way wins": results that are meaningful not only for work and career, or for home and family, or for community and society, or for yourself, but for *all* these seemingly disparate domains. We practice the principles of being real (acting with authenticity), being whole (acting with integrity), and being innovative (acting

with creativity). Leadership using these principles is learned while taking action toward a direction that personally matters, while gaining support, and reflecting on the experience.

It is based on over 30 years of research as well as real-world, practical knowledge. I have coached thousands of people using the Total Leadership approach. If you're like the people I've worked with at the Wharton School and in organizations around the world, this method can help you perform better according to the standards of your most important people, feel better, and experience greater harmony because you will have more resources at your disposal to fit the parts of your life together.

My life's work has focused on a fundamental misconception we have about the costs of success. Too many people believe that to achieve great things we must always make brutal sacrifices; that to succeed in our professional lives we must focus single-mindedly, at the expense of family, self, and society. Even those who reject the idea of a zero-sum game between work and the rest of life fall prey to a kind of binary thinking revealed by the term we use to describe the ideal lifestyle: work-life balance.

Total Leadership is not an abstract idea; it is a structured method that produces measurable change. It's an approach for developing leadership *and* it offers a proven method for integrating work and the rest of life.

Work-life balance is a misguided metaphor for grasping the relationship between work and the rest of life; the image of the scale forces you to think in terms of tradeoffs instead of the possibilities for harmony. And the idea that "work" competes with "life" ignores the more nuanced reality of our humanity. It ignores that "life" is actually the interaction of all the roles we play. Of course, you can't have it all—complete success in all the corners of your life all at the same time. No one can. But our research shows that, while it can seem impossible to bring the four domains into greater alignment, conflict and stress aren't inevitable. Greater harmony *is* possible.

Jenna's Journey

"I like my work," wrote Jenna at the beginning of a Total Leadership workshop some years ago. "It gives me a sense of purpose, an opportunity to encounter and influence people in ways that make me feel good about the world I'm living in. But spending so much energy on my career has made other areas of my life fall short of my expectations."

A 48-year-old mother of three children, Jenna worked at the time as a manager at a small real estate consulting firm in Philadelphia. She enjoyed considerable success. And, yet, like many people, she wasn't satisfied with how things were going

in her life. She reflected further:

“Work infringes completely on the quantity and quality of the time I spend with my family. I’ve missed out on too much of my children’s lives. And I’ve allowed other areas of my life to suffer. I’m too busy to read, go hear live music, or do other things I love, and I’ve only managed to promote my physical health—like walking in the woods—for short periods. I can’t help thinking my work suffers from the dissatisfaction I feel elsewhere.”

Jenna had numerous responsibilities beyond work. She had many people who mattered to her and to whom she mattered, starting with her partner of 20 years and their adopted children, who were 17, 13, and 9. But her sense of overwhelming responsibilities and pinched satisfaction had been growing, and it was exacerbated by the fact that Jenna’s father was dying of pancreatic cancer. She wanted to change her work situation to free up time to care for him with her sister, with whom she had always been close, without sacrificing precious time with her partner and children. In the old days, the only way she knew to achieve some satisfaction in her life at work and in her life away from work was to trade off one area for another, in a chase after some kind of balance. But that search—with the demands of employees, kids, partner, sister, and father—seemed more and more futile.

After her four months of practicing the Total Leadership program, though, Jenna changed. She exchanged her frequent feelings of being distracted and irritable for feelings of being more fully engaged both at work and in her life beyond work. She no longer felt passive. She reduced the internal conflict that had been weighing her down and began to focus on things that really mattered to her.

Most importantly, Jenna began to think of herself as a leader in all parts of her life. She discovered, in a frank conversation with her boss, that he cared for her as a person and wanted to support her desire to attend to her father. He expressed concern about her health. This emboldened her to take steps to reconfigure her work arrangements in ways she had never before considered. She came to see for the first time that because her coworkers depended on her, she could depend on them in ways she hadn’t thought of before. Jenna created new freedom for herself at work by delegating to those who not only could take on new responsibilities but who benefited from doing so, for their own growth. She adjusted her schedule so she could focus on the most important aspects of her job, help her sister care for their ailing father, and find time

for taking a few long walks each week. In short, she became a better leader—more real, more whole, and more innovative.

Jenna works fewer hours today than she did back then, and she’s *more* productive. Not only do her boss and co-workers benefit, but her family does, too. Her physical and emotional wellbeing has improved. For Jenna, the Total Leadership program provided a way to create small changes at work (delegating more and spending less time at the office) that produced better performance all the way around—four-way wins. She learned how to work with colleagues and connect with her family and community in new ways, enlisting support by ensuring that others benefited also from changes she was making. She’s a new kind of leader.

Like Jenna, most people want to be better leaders and have richer lives. Some feel unfulfilled and unhappy because they’re not doing what they love. Some don’t feel genuine. Too many of their daily activities are inconsistent with who they want to be. They’re unfocused and so they lack a sense of purpose infused with meaning. Despite such frustrations, and others (like feeling disconnected or without optimism about the future), many of us feel compelled to make our world better—to lead more effectively in all aspects of our lives. The concrete steps laid out in Total Leadership show you how to do this.

Diagnose Your Situation

Before you can design smart experiments to better integrate the four domains of your life, you need to figure out what’s most important to you and identify your biggest pain points. Using a four-way chart (see below) helps set priorities. Here’s one, based on a business professional we’ll call Sam. You can find a blank worksheet and other tools at totalleadership.org.

Sam said this after he drew up his four-way view: “I have to admit that what my wife says is true: I spend most of my time either at work or working from home. We don’t do anything together anymore, except take care of the kids. We’re losing touch as a couple. Also, I’m feeling tired and out of shape, even though my health is important to me. I do think my job and family are more important than community stuff, but it surprises me to realize I’m doing nothing in that area. Maybe I could do something active with my wife that would help me *and* our relationship—and even benefit the community.”

Experiment in Pursuit of Four-Way Wins

The most fruitful experiments help you make improvements

SAM’S FOUR-WAY CHART

	Importance	Focus of Attention	Satisfaction 1 = Not at All / 10 = Fully
Work	20%	70%	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Home	40%	20%	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Community	15%	0%	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Self	25%	10%	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
	100%	100%	

SAM'S EXPERIMENT: EXERCISE THREE MORNINGS A WEEK WITH MY WIFE.

Life Area	Goals	Metrics	Actions
Work	Improving alertness and productivity	No caffeine late in the day, better morale on my team, more productive sales calls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get doctor's feedback on exercise plan • Join gym • Set alarm earlier on exercise days • Tell coworkers, family, and friends about my plan, how I need their help, and how it will benefit them
Home	Spending more time with wife	Fewer arguments, feeling closer	
Community	Increasing strength to participate in athletic fundraising events with friends	Three 10K fundraising walks completed this year	
Self	Improving self-esteem	Greater confidence	

across the four domains. At work, you may want to increase productivity or reduce costs. Goals for home and community may include strengthening relationships and contributing more to social causes. For self, it's often about becoming healthier and finding greater purpose.

How can a single experiment help you check off several—or all—of those boxes? Some experiments improve one domain directly and others indirectly through ripple effects. For example, being more disciplined about your diet will have a direct impact on your health, but it may also give you more energy for your work and raise your self-esteem, which in turn might make you a better parent and friend. Other activities—such as running a half-marathon with your kids to raise funds for a charity sponsored by your company—will feed all four domains simultaneously. Whether the benefits are direct or indirect,

achieving a four-way win is the goal. That's what makes the changes sustainable: Everyone gains. Keep in mind that some benefits may be subtle or delayed; far-off career advancements, for instance, or a contact that might ultimately offer valuable connections.

Pace Yourself and Gauge Your Progress

It's not practical to try out more than three experiments at once. Typically, two turn out to be relatively successful and one goes haywire. So after you've brainstormed possibilities, narrow down the list to two or three options that will:

- Give you the best overall return on your investment
- Cost the most in regret if you *don't* do them
- Allow you to practice the leadership skills you most want to develop

TOTAL LEADERSHIP EXPERIMENTS

Tracking and Reflecting

Keeping record of activity, thoughts, and feelings (and in some cases distributing it) to assess progress on goals, increasing self-awareness, and maintaining priorities.

Planning and Organizing

Taking new actions to better use time and plan by, for example, using a new tool for organizing, creating “to do” lists that involve all domains, or engaging in new career planning.

Rejuvenating and Restoring

Attending to body, mind, and spirit so that life tasks are undertaken with renewed power, focus, and commitment.

Appreciating and Caring

Having fun with people (e.g., by doing things typically outside of work with co-workers), caring for others, and appreciating relationships as a way of bonding at a basic human level.

Focusing and Concentrating

Trying to be physically or psychologically present when needed to pay attention to those who matter most. This might mean saying “no” to opportunities or obligations.

Revealing and Engaging

Sharing more of your self with others—and listening—so they can better support both your values and the steps you want to take toward realizing your leadership vision.

Time-shifting and Re-placing

Working remotely or during different hours to increase flexibility and thus better fit community, family, and self activities while increasing efficiencies.

Delegating and Developing

Re-allocating tasks in ways that increase trust, free up time, and develop skills in self and others; working smarter by reducing and/or eliminating low-priority activities.

Exploring and Venturing

Taking steps toward starting a new job, career, or other activity that better aligns your work, family, community, and/or self domains with your core values and aspirations.

- Involve more of what you enjoy doing
- Move you closest to your vision of how you want to lead your life

Once you begin experimenting, however, don't become too wedded to the details of any one plan. You will need to make adjustments. The only way to fail with an experiment is to fail to learn from it, and this makes useful metrics essential. No doubt it's better to achieve results than to fall short, but failed experiments give you, and those around you, information that helps create better ones in the future.

Suppose that Sam, the business professional described in the chart, has decided to try exercising three mornings a week with his spouse to address the pain points he identified in his four-way chart. In the sample scorecard on the previous page, he spells out his experiment's goals and how he'll track progress in achieving them.

As you implement your own experiments, you may find your initial goals or metrics were too vague, so refine your scorecard as you go to make it more useful. The main point

The main point is to have practical ways of measuring progress and learning from your innovative efforts.

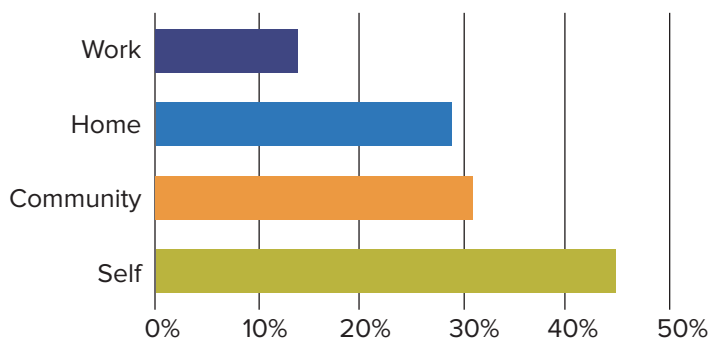
is to have practical ways of measuring progress and learning from your innovative efforts.

The key is to design such innovations in ways that are customized to your own situation. Doing so increases your confidence *and* competence as a leader of innovation. Indeed, that was a prime motivator for the initial creation of this program: empower people to take real action to make things better for all parts of their lives.

Depending on your goals, your metrics may include cost savings from reduced travel, number of e-mail misunderstandings averted, degree of satisfaction with family time, hours spent volunteering at a teen center, and so on. They can be

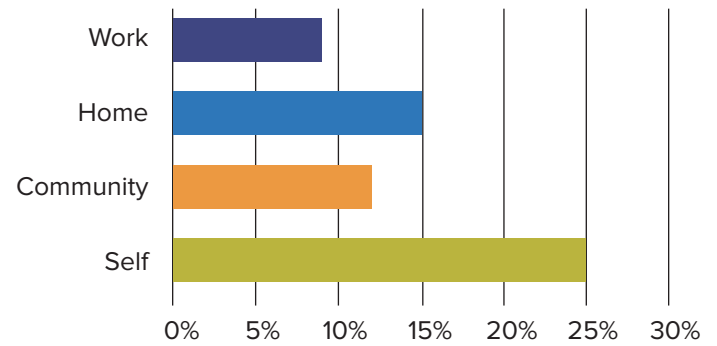
RESULTS: IMPROVED SATISFACTION (% GAIN)

Increase in Satisfaction



RESULTS: IMPROVED PERFORMANCE (% GAIN)

Increase in Meeting Performance Expectations



objective or subjective, qualitative or quantitative, reported by you or by others, and frequently or intermittently observed.

Highly ambitious experiments usually fail because they're too much to handle. When the stakes are smaller, it's easier to overcome the fear of failure that can inhibit change. And you open doors that would otherwise be closed. You can say to people, "Let's just try this. If it doesn't work, we'll go back to the old way or try something different." Those who might be affected by the change will be more receptive if they know it's not permanent and if they have a say in whether it's working according to *their* needs.

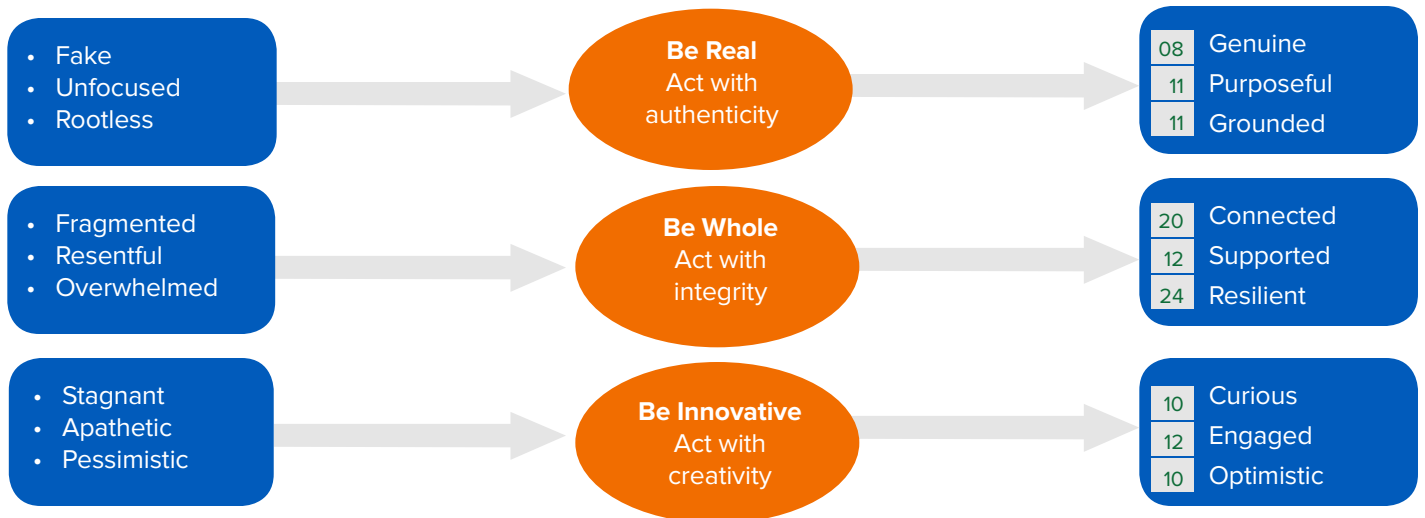
Measurable ROI

Total Leadership came to fruition when I was recruited to head up leadership development worldwide for Ford Motor Company, where I served for over two years. We started with 35 high-potential managers from across the globe. They followed all the steps in the Total Leadership program and, in the span of about four months, implemented changes that touched work and the other parts of their lives. Their experiments produced a combined \$5.8 million in cost savings, \$0.7 million in new revenue, and \$0.5 million in productivity gains.

In addition to the quantifiable dollar results, these business professionals improved their relationships with customers and colleagues and felt more satisfied with their jobs. They felt more deeply connected to their families and their communities, especially since they had drawn them into the process of change. They reported feeling healthier and less stressed. They were making better use of leisure time. And they were feeling better about the company, and more excited about tying their futures to its future. They accomplished this by reframing the idea of business leadership and applying new skills and insights at work, at home, in the community, and within the self.

By now, thousands more people have tested the Total Leadership method in classes at Wharton and in workshops in companies around the world. They find that, by proceeding through a guided series of exercises, they can make changes that allow them to focus their attention better. Their core values surface, allowing them to transform the way they allocate their time, skills, and resources. As a result, their daily actions

RESULTS: INCREASED CONFIDENCE AS A LEADER (% POSITIVE CHANGE)



become more closely aligned with their values. They work smarter with greater focus and commitment. They achieve the results that matter to them most in all areas of their lives. I have asked thousands of participants to compare how they assess their satisfaction before and after they've taken themselves through Total Leadership.

Their levels of satisfaction increase by an average of 14 percent in their work lives, 29 percent in their home lives, and 31 percent in their community lives (see left). Perhaps most significantly, their satisfaction with their own interior lives—physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual—increases by 42 percent. Similarly, they report that their performance in meeting expectations of key people at work, at home, and in their communities has improved, respectively, by 9, 15, and 12 percent (see above left). And they are better at meeting their own expectations for themselves, 25 percent better.

Both satisfaction and performance improve in all parts

of life. Total Leadership is not an abstract idea; it is a structured method that produces measurable change. You become more focused on the things that matter and so you feel more grounded, more like the person you want to be. You generate more support and feel more connected to the important people in your life. You become more resilient in response to the vagaries of our turbulent world. And you become more open to discovery and so feel more hopeful, indeed enthusiastic, about the future and your power to shape it. The chart above shows the results of how people change in their perceptions of themselves as leaders after going through the exercises of Total Leadership alongside others with whom they provide mutual coaching.

Total Leadership Skills

Mobilizing people toward valued goals is what effective leaders do, whether or not they have people reporting

RESULTS: ENHANCED TOTAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS (% INCREASE)

Be real

- 18 Know what matters
- 11 Embody values consistently
- 18 Align actions with values
- 20 Convey values with stories
- 26 Envision your legacy
- 12 Hold yourself accountable

Be whole

- 28 Clarify expectations
- 07 Help others
- 10 Build supportive networks
- 14 Apply all your resources
- 26 Manage boundaries well
- 26 Weave disparate strands

Be innovative

- 10 Focus on results
- 22 Resolve conflicts among domains
- 12 Challenge the status quo
- 09 See new ways of doing things
- 11 Embrace change courageously
- 12 Create cultures of innovation

TOTAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Skills for Being Real: Being real is to act with authenticity by clarifying what's important to you. This is the foundation; your values, and your vision of the future you want to create.

Know what matters. You know how important each of the different aspects of your life is to you.

Embody values consistently. You are able to be yourself wherever you are, wherever you go. You act in ways consistent with your core values.

Align actions with values. You make choices about how to spend time and energy in ways that match what you really care about.

Convey values with stories. You tell stories of the key people and events that have shaped your values in a way that binds you to others.

Envision your legacy. You have a vision for where you are headed and the legacy you want to leave.

Hold yourself accountable. You hold yourself accountable for doing what is most important to you in your life.

Skills for Being Whole: Being whole is to act with integrity (the Latin root is *integer*, which means "complete") by respecting all the different parts that comprise the whole person, ensuring that you and the people who inhabit these parts are clear about what you need from each other and are willing to provide it.

Clarify expectations. You communicate with people important to you about expectations you have of each other, and you make sure these expectations are clear.

Help others. You look for opportunities to help many different people.

Build supportive networks. You are able to convince people to support you in your goals.

Apply all your resources. You use skills and contacts from different parts of your life to help meet any need or goal.

Manage boundaries intelligently. You are able to delineate and maintain boundaries between the different parts of your life.

Weave disparate strands. You are able to weave together the pieces of your life so that it has coherence.

Skills for Being Innovative: Being innovative is to act with creativity and courage, continually experimenting with how things get done, bringing others along with you as you progress toward goals that matter.

Focus on results. You focus on the results of your efforts to accomplish goals and are flexible about the means for achieving them.

Resolve conflicts among domains. You seek creative solutions to conflicts rather than sacrificing one part of life for another.

Challenge the status quo. You challenge traditional assumptions about how things are done, experimenting to make things better whenever possible.

See new ways of doing things. You are willing to question old habits and innovate in managing life's demands.

Embrace change courageously. You look forward to change—seeing it as an opportunity—rather than fear it.

Create cultures of innovation. You look for opportunities to encourage others to learn new ways of doing things.

to them. It's not about executive authority. Indeed, you probably know great leaders with no one below them in a hierarchy who get a tremendous amount done themselves and through others and, on the other hand, people in executive roles with many subordinates who can't lead themselves out of a paper bag. Wherever you are, you can lead, and you can up your game with a bit of intentional effort.

Great leaders continually develop their skills and devote substantial effort to practice. A set of discrete skills can help you find ways to integrate life's four domains. Anyone can learn and with practice master these skills. This kind of integration, in turn, helps leaders have the impact they want to have and lead a life in which they stay true to self, serve others, and grow as a person. The sidebar above provides an overview of the skills for leaders to be real, whole, and innovative. It's available as a free self-assessment at qualtrics.com/totalleadership.

Over the past two decades I've studied the impact of the four-month Total Leadership program on the development of these skills in a wide variety of organizations. The chart on the previous page shows the percentage improvement in these skills as a result of this learning journey.

Why It Works

Total Leadership has proven to be an achievable approach for producing positive, sustainable change in both the mind-

set and the leadership skill sets of people in organizations worldwide. Among the factors contributing to this successful impact are:

- The standard timeframe we use—four months, from start to finish of the basic program—is long enough to see initial impact but short enough not to test patience of overloaded business professionals.
- The many-times-tested tools are accessible for people at all levels and in cultures as varied as manufacturing companies in South America to health care conglomerates in the U.S. to banks in Spain.
- Peer-to-peer coaching, which is the secret sauce of this model, ensures both ongoing support and accountability pressure as well as the special kind of insight one gains when trying to help someone else learn.
- Engaging program alumni from one generation to the next reinforces the real-world applications that make it work in the local company and regional culture. Perhaps most important is the idea that compels people to deeply commit to this initiative: leadership in our world today cannot be only about work. It must be about life. ■■

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