

UNIQUELY YOU

TRANSFORM YOUR
ORGANIZATION
BY BECOMING THE LEADER
ONLY YOU CAN BE

RON KITCHENS

1

Mandarin Oranges

A SMALL GIFT CAN CHANGE A LIFE

From now on, any definition of a successful life
must include serving others.

George H.



ALWAYS FORWARD

- Who can you serve today to change their life—or simply show love and compassion—with something as basic as a box of food or a can of oranges?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply my mandarin orange lesson in your life, or maybe your life story wants to teach you something more important for this moment. On pages 201–8 I’ve provided a brainstorming tool titled “Mining Lessons from Your Unique Life Story,” a list of categories and prompts to help you remember instructive stories and experiences from your past. What is your life trying to teach you?

2

“You Can’t Read”

BOOKS, GROWTH, AND SUCCESS

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

1 John 3:18

Southwest Michigan First's Catalyst Reading List

- *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't* by Jim Collins
- *StrengthsFinder 2.0* by Tom Rath
- *The Ideal Team Player: How to Recognize and Cultivate the Three Essential Virtues* by Patrick Lencioni
- *The Four Obsessions of an Extraordinary Executive: A Leadership Fable* by Patrick Lencioni
- *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* by Simon Sinek
- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* by Stephen R. Covey
- *Community Capitalism: Lessons from Kalamazoo and Beyond* by Ron Kitchens
- *Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant* by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne
- *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Joffe Numeroff and Felicia Bond



ALWAYS FORWARD

- When did someone cast a vision for your life? How did that impact your future?
- Reflect on a teacher, coach, or other influential adult who impacted your life, and send her or him a thank-you. If you don't know where to send it, post it on Facebook; chances are good you'll connect. How can you pay forward that person's kindness?
- The most common excuse for not reading is lack of time. What can you eliminate or reduce in your schedule to give yourself five hours a month to read?
- Leaders of some of America's greatest organizations read a book per week. What is your plan to grow by reading? What books will you read in the next ninety days?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

My lesson about reading might be just what you need right now. Or maybe your story is trying to teach you something more pertinent in this moment. You can use the instrument provided on pages 201–8 to remind you of instructive stories and experiences from your past.

3

Lunch Shaming

CHOOSE SOLUTIONS THAT LIFT UP

No man can cause more grief than that one clinging blindly to the vices of his ancestors.

William Faulkner

4

Pork Chops

GROWING BY OBSERVING

Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance.

Will Durant

Here's a sampling from A Curated Life:

- Talk with Academy Award–winning writer Aaron Sor-kin about his creative process.
- Have dinner with Oprah Winfrey to talk about how she achieves so much in one day.
- Give a college commencement speech.
- Tour the Mississippi Blues Trail, where so much of America's music and food culture started.
- Feed ten thousand people a holiday meal over my life-time (I'm well on my way).
- Assist sixty men and women to become leaders of their own organizations.



ALWAYS FORWARD

- What is your pork chop story? How do its lessons inform your life? What assumptions, born of ignorance, are holding you back?
- Who are three people you can ask for honest feedback about ways lack of knowledge is limiting your success? (Who can you help in this way?)
- Which experiences can you curate for your life in order to evaporate ignorance and biases?
- How are you putting yourself into situations of discovery?

YOUR **UNIQUE** JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply my pork chop lesson in your life. But take a moment to listen to your life. Pages 201–8 might help you see and hear an even more important lesson on your unique journey.

5

Legacy

IMPACTING PEOPLE'S LIVES

As leaders, we are never responsible to fill anyone else's cup. Our responsibility is to empty ours.

Andy Stanley



ALWAYS FORWARD

- Who has positively impacted your life in unselfish ways that have propelled you forward? Who is doing this for you today?
- How can you use the lessons in your life to impact and serve others?
- It's the day of your funeral. Who do you hope will gather to celebrate your life? What stories do you want them to tell about you? What will you do today to make that happen?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You might wish to apply my Mr. Countryman lesson in your life, or perhaps your unique journey involves a different, more valuable lesson for you today. If it helps, use pages 201–8 to remember instructive stories and experiences.

6

“I Know You Can”

HELPING OTHERS SEE THEIR FUTURE

I believe in the power one person has to change
the life of another.

Ron Kitchens



ALWAYS FORWARD

- When has someone encouraged you with fresh vision for your future? What did they see in you? How did their belief in you impact you? In what ways are you still faithful to their vision?
- In whom might you inspire fresh confidence this week? How might you help them see their future with new hope?
- How would your relationships, personal and professional, change if you focused on what you can give instead of what you can get?

YOUR **UNIQUE** JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply my Ewing Kauffman lesson in your life, or maybe your story wants to teach you something more important for this moment. On pages 201–8 I've provided a list of categories and prompts that might help you brainstorm and remember instructive stories and experiences.

7

Lagniappe

A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA

How far that little candle throws its beams! So
shines a good deed in a naughty world.

William Shakespeare



ALWAYS FORWARD

- When has someone added that something extra to your experience?
- Where can you add lagniappe in your services to others?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply my lagniappe lesson in your life, or maybe your story wants to teach you something more important for this moment. On pages 201–8 I’ve provided a list of categories and prompts that might help you brainstorm and remember instructive stories and experiences.

8

“Let Me Predict Your Future”

HARD TRUTH, SPOKEN IN LOVE

The future belongs to those who believe in the
beauty of their dreams.

Eleanor Roosevelt



ALWAYS FORWARD

- When has a hard truth, spoken in love, proven helpful to you?
- Imagine, without any limitations, who you would choose as a mentor. What lessons do you want to learn from them? From their mentoring, what results would you expect in your life, leadership, and organization? What's holding you back from learning from them in person, or via video, writings, or podcasts?
- What three areas in your leadership would be accelerated by coaching?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

My lesson about mentors might be just what you need in your life and leadership. But consider also whether your unique life experience offers something even more valuable. Pages 201–8 might help you find what your story is trying to teach you now.

9

“That’s Not Our Plan”

STAYING TRUE TO YOUR DREAMS

A dream is something you really want to do, but
a calling is something you have to do.

John Maxwell



ALWAYS FORWARD

- What is your Jerusalem wall? What dream does wisdom require you to dismiss and allow others to complete?
- What distractions are keeping you from achieving what you were created for?
- Who is holding you accountable to staying focused on your mission and dreams?

YOUR **UNIQUE** JOURNEY

You're welcome to apply my Nehemiah lesson, or perhaps a different lesson from your experience is what you need right now. Consider using pages 201–8 to help find it.

10

The Four Horses

UNDERSTANDING THE RACE YOU WERE
CREATED TO RUN

If you spend your life trying to be good at every-
thing, you will never be great at anything.

Tom Rath



ALWAYS FORWARD

- What type of horse are you? Ask three people you trust (not including your mom) how they would describe your talents and strengths.
- Where in your life are you “a fish trying to climb a tree”? How can you stop working in that area?
- If you were building the strongest team possible for your organization, what would be the attributes of each role?
- If you designed a regular monitoring and review process, what would it look like?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply my four horses lesson in your life, or maybe your story wants to teach you something more important for this moment. On pages 201–8 I’ve provided a list of categories and prompts that might help you brainstorm and remember instructive stories and experiences.

11

Great Teams

WHAT IT TAKES TO WIN

Talent is the product. With the right people, given the correct incentives, encouraged and driven to their highest individual accomplishments, blended into a balanced and adaptive team, winnowed when they can't succeed, you will adapt to competitive challenges. Talent is the product.

Jeff Angus



ALWAYS FORWARD

- In what role are you serving, and how does it impact your organization's successes?
- Do you want to change roles now or in the future? How are you preparing for a change?
- How can you better support your team?
- What experiences in your past can help improve your hiring process?
- If your organization conformed to the highest expectations for staff makeup, capacity, and skills, what difference would that make?

YOUR **UNIQUE** JOURNEY

If my lesson about teams is right on target for you, run with it. If not, what other lesson might you draw from your unique life experience, perhaps using the prompts provided on pages 201–8?

12

Surround Yourself

WHO IS MAKING YOU BETTER?

The world will tell you that you do not measure up. You need someone to encourage you, to tell you that you do.

Paul Rasmussen



ALWAYS FORWARD

- Which five to eight people would form your ideal personal board? Be realistic, choosing people to whom you have access.
- With whom are you choosing to spend your time and your life, and how are they currently making you better? How can you increase that time or maximize its benefit?
- Whose “stupid” is sticking to you and bringing your life’s trajectory down? What will you do to correct this?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

If my lesson about these important relationships isn’t high priority for you at this moment, you might use pages 201–8 to brainstorm and recall other instructive stories and experiences from your unique life journey.

13

No Fences

KNOCKING DOWN BARRIERS

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



ALWAYS FORWARD

- What fences need to be torn down to make your community better? What are you waiting for?
- Whom can you invite to bring resources and help with your mission?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply my fences lesson in your life, or maybe your story wants to teach you something more important for this moment. On pages 201–8 I've provided a list of categories and prompts that might help you brainstorm and remember instructive stories and experiences.

14

CEO of Your Own Responsibilities

LEADING LIKE AN OWNER

Do not just delegate tasks to the next generation. If you delegate tasks, you create followers. Instead, delegate authority to create leaders.

Craig Groeschel



ALWAYS FORWARD

- How can you and your team take responsibility for your failures in order to ensure success in the future?
- What are you empowering your team members to achieve?
- What freedoms will support their sense of personal responsibility?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

If you need to focus on becoming or helping each of your people become a CEO of one's own responsibilities, go for it. If, on the other hand, your life is teaching you something even more important, consider using pages 201–8 to guide your exploration of your unique experience.

15

Family First

KNOW WHAT MATTERS

Your leadership of your family will grow in direct proportion to the love that you show your family.

Mark Merrill



ALWAYS FORWARD

- Where have you seen people pick work or other responsibility over family, only to discover later that their efforts made little or no impact on the organization's success?
- What three things would you add or change in your organization to make it more family friendly? What is holding you back?
- If you were CEO, what would you change in your work-life integration? How can you make that happen, regardless of your title?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

If it fits, please run with my family-first lesson in your life and leadership. But if your life is trying to teach you a different lesson, you may wish to use pages 201–8 to help you brainstorm and remember instructive stories and experiences.

16

Be Original

DON'T FAKE YOUR LIFE

Celebrate your existence!

William Blake



ALWAYS FORWARD

- Want to know what your current brand is?
 - Write your obituary.
 - Ask your spouse, your boss, and a friend to write your obituary.
- In fifteen words or less, write a summary of your brand. Do not include your titles or roles, just what is remarkable and distinctive.
- What do you want to be famous for? For Bob Goff, it's love.
- Where in your life can you step out of the shadows and allow your light to shine?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply my lesson on originality in your life, or maybe your story wants to teach you something more important for this moment. On pages 201–8 I've provided a list of categories and prompts that might help you brainstorm and remember instructive stories and experiences.

17

Action over Emotion

KICK FEAR IN THE FACE

Fear will shout about who you were; love will whisper about who we are becoming. Listen to the truest voice, not the loudest one.

Bob Goff



ALWAYS FORWARD

- What fears are holding you back?
- Can you identify the source of these? How can you address them?
- If you were to proceed in spite of fear, what three things would you attempt?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You might need to deal with fear in your life and leadership. If so, this chapter's lesson is for you. But if not, ask what other lesson your unique life experience is trying to teach you. Maybe pages 201–8 will help.

18

Protecting Joy

EDIT YOUR LIFE FOR EXCELLENCE

Self-care is not selfish. Self-care is strategic.

Mike Foster



ALWAYS FORWARD

- How might a commitment to starting your day with prayer or meditation (or both) change your life?
- Look at your calendar for the next ninety days. How could you apply a formula like my 70/20/10?
- If you allocate your time to what is most important, to what will you no longer be able to say yes? Or to what will you need to say yes less?
- Where are you at risk for burnout?
- What practices can you put into place to avoid or reverse these symptoms?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

If you need to protect or regain your joy, I encourage you to apply this chapter's lesson in your life and leadership. Or maybe your story wants to teach you something more important today. You could use pages 201–8 to mine life lessons from your unique journey.

19

What Do You Want?

AND OTHER QUESTIONS WE NEVER ANSWER

One reason so few of us achieve what we truly want is that we never direct our focus; we never concentrate our power. Most people dabble their way through life, never deciding to master anything too particular.

Tony Robbins



ALWAYS FORWARD

- What do you want? What are ten things you want but have never had the courage to tell anyone?
- Who can help you achieve your dreams? What is holding you back from asking?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply this chapter's lesson in your life, or maybe your story wants to teach you something more important for this moment. On pages 201–8 I've provided a list of categories and prompts that might help you brainstorm and remember instructive stories and experiences.

20

The Kindness of Candor

HONESTY AS A GIFT WE GIVE

Candor is a compliment; it implies equality. It is how true friends talk.

Peggy Noonan



ALWAYS FORWARD

- Where have you seen candor delivered with kindness?
- What are the barriers to open communication on your team?
- How will you model and encourage constructive candor under your leadership?

YOUR **UNIQUE** JOURNEY

If you need this lesson about kind candor, please focus on this chapter's application in your life and leadership. Or feel free to let pages 201–8 help guide your exploration through your unique past experiences for a relevant life lesson for you.

21

Love Notes

TAKE A MINUTE, CHANGE A LIFE

Study after study shows there's no practice more effective at increasing your happiness and well-being than practicing radical gratitude.

Jud Wilhite



you are a Catalyst

southwest michigan  first

I believe in you

Love Notes

I CANNOT IMAGINE WHAT
WE WOULD BE WITHOUT
YOU. THANK YOU FOR
CHOOSING US EVERY DAY!
- RON





ALWAYS FORWARD

- When have you received a note of gratitude? How did it make you feel?
- Whose joy can you take to the next level by sending them a note?
- What practices of regular gratitude could you institute in your organization?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

Feel free to apply my love notes lesson in your life and leadership, or maybe your unique life story offers an even more important lesson for this point in your journey. Pages 201–8 might help.

22

Preeminence

DEFINING YOUR STANDARDS

Excellence is no longer an option, nor does it happen by accident. Excellence is a matter of understanding who you are as a person, an organization, a family—it's knowing what matters to you.

Ron Kitchens



ALWAYS FORWARD

- What axioms define you personally?
- What changes in your life do you need to make to be preeminent?
- What would your perfect preeminent organization look like?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply my preeminence lesson in your life, or maybe your story wants to teach you something more important for this moment. On pages 201–8 I've provided a list of categories and prompts that might help you brainstorm and remember instructive stories and experiences.

23

Scrum

GATHERING FOR IMPACT

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead



ALWAYS FORWARD

- How are you ensuring your team is all-in on your culture?
- What is holding you back from your own version of the daily scrum?
- What will you do each day?

YOUR **UNIQUE** JOURNEY

It might be a high priority for you to implement something like scrums in your life and leadership. But if your life story is trying to teach you something more important, feel free to explore your unique journey, perhaps using pages 201–8.

24

The Four Most Powerful Words

“I BELIEVE IN YOU”

Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.

A. A. Milne



ALWAYS FORWARD

- Who can you reach out to today to tell them that you believe in them?
- When in your life has the power of someone's belief in you propelled your leadership?

YOUR UNIQUE JOURNEY

You are welcome to apply my lesson about the four most powerful words, or maybe your story wants to teach you something more important for this moment. On pages 201–8 I've provided a list of categories and prompts that might help you brainstorm and remember instructive stories and experiences.

In Summary

PRINCIPLES FROM MY LIFE STORY

Here are key principles from the stories I've shared from my past. I hope this will serve you as a quick reference after you've finished this book.

Chapter 0 *Changed for Good*

Listen to your life; put into practice the lessons your story is trying to teach you.

Chapter 1 *Mandarin Oranges*

Never minimize the importance of small kindnesses; offer them often and see lives change.

Chapter 2 *"You Can't Read"*

Never stop learning—especially from great books—in order to broaden yourself and enhance your leadership effectiveness.

Chapter 3 *Lunch Shaming*

Choose solutions that are more than merely expedient—solutions that respect people and lift them up.

Chapter 4 *Pork Chops*

Observe successful people; learn and live from what you see.

Chapter 5 *Legacy*

Live and lead now with a view toward the impact you will leave on people after you're gone.

Chapter 6 *"I Know You Can"*

Help others see their future by forecasting it with optimism. Show them you believe in them!

Chapter 7 *Lagniappe*

Enhance your reputation and quality of service by adding that little something extra.

Chapter 8 *"Let Me Predict Your Future"*

Welcome the input of people who love you enough to tell you the hard truth.

Chapter 9 *"That's Not Our Plan"*

Once your dream has become clear, stay the course, resisting distractions.

Chapter 10 *The Four Horses*

Seek to understand yourself and pursue the race you were created to run.

Chapter 11 *Great Teams*

Organizations and teams benefit from members who are different from the rest.

Chapter 12 *Surround Yourself*

Strategically choose a circle of influencers in your life who will make you better.

Chapter 13 *No Fences*

Where you can, challenge injustice and knock down artificial barriers between people groups.

Chapter 14 *CEO of Your Own Responsibilities*

In every aspect of your work, large and small, serve and lead as if you were the owner; give your team members this same freedom and challenge.

Chapter 15 *Family First*

Give priority to your most important job—the loved ones in your care.

Chapter 16 *Be Original*

Living with authenticity and integrity, inspiring others, and building your brand will help you achieve leadership impact.

Chapter 17 *Action over Emotion*

Conquer fears—real and imagined—by taking responsible action to minimize or eliminate the feared outcomes.

Chapter 18 *Protecting Joy*

Seek out people, environments, and intellectual “food” that move you toward excellence; edit out all that don’t.

Chapter 19 *What Do You Want?*

Take the time and make the effort to achieve clarity about your important life goals and how to achieve them.

Chapter 20 *The Kindness of Candor*

Help your people grow by telling them the truth constructively, cushioned in compassion.

Chapter 21 *Love Notes*

A short note of encouragement can change a life; make written affirmation a regular feature of your leadership practice.

Chapter 22 *Preeminence*

Carefully choose, define, communicate, and support your organizational standards.

Chapter 23 *Scrum*

Implement frequent team gatherings to enhance organizational efficiency and impact.

Chapter 24 *The Four Most Powerful Words*

Demonstrate to others that you believe in them.

Mining Lessons from Your Unique Life Story

Following are a number of different approaches to exploring your unique life experience from different angles, through different lenses. You might find that one approach helps you remember only so many instructive experiences. A different angle might turn up other memories. Some of your stories might require time to remember, so keep coming back and trying again from time to time as you read through this book. Some of my stories and “Always Forward” questions might also trigger memories from your unique experience.

When you remember a story from your life, in order to let it teach you its lessons, follow a two-step pattern:

1. Explore and record the important *details* of the story. Who was involved? What happened? What choices did you or others make? How did it turn out? How did this experience impact and change you long-term?

2. What life *lesson* did that experience teach? Did you learn the lesson then? Later? Ever? Have other experiences reinforced the same lesson over time? How can you apply that lesson in your present and future? In your personal life? In your leadership at work or elsewhere?

You might compile several stories in one sitting or one or two at a time. Once you've finished this book, I urge you to establish a habit of regularly recording additional stories and their lessons as they come to mind.

Once you've gathered a number of stories and their lessons, you might wish to find a way to sort them by priority. Which lessons require your most immediate attention and application in your life and leadership? Give each story/lesson a title, list the titles, then rearrange them in priority order. You might attach target progress or completion dates for goals that arise from your stories and what they teach.

Exploring through Questions

Choose one (at a time) of these questions to help you brainstorm stories from your life experience.

- Imagine you are sitting around a fire with your most trusted friends. The night grows long, and you feel free to be honest and transparent. You know any story you share will never be repeated. Which tales would you tell? How would your friends react? Now pause. How can you use these stories to shape your leadership?
- If you comprised a highlight reel of your life, which stories would you include?

Mining Lessons from Your Unique Life Story

- What in your past experiences has come to define your leadership? How can you use this to strengthen your organization?
- Which experiences in your life have become your hardened, protective shell? Are they like a knight's armor that expands with your movement, or are they rigid and inflexible, restricting your growth?
- What issue or issues from your past were formative? If they influenced you positively, how will you build on them now? If they influenced you negatively, how can you work to remediate or eliminate their effect? How would you summarize their lessons?

Exploring Your Life Seasons

One way to remember your life experiences is to picture different phases of your life.

- Your preschool years (birth–age 5)
- Your childhood (ages 6–12)
- Your teens (ages 13–18)
- Your young adulthood (ages 19–30)
- Your middle years (ages 30–50)
- Your later years (age 50+)

Exploring Areas of Life

Some of your life stories might come to mind by thinking about life's different arenas of experience.

Mining Lessons from Your Unique Life Story

- Your family of origin
- Your marriage and family
- Friends
- Physical health
- Intellectual growth
- Spirituality
- Political, economic, and social issues
- Community connections
- Conflicts and hardships
- Happy times
- Character qualities
- Personality
- Purpose in life
- Your routines and what they reveal

Exploring Leadership Topics

Pondering some of these leadership issues might help you remember some of your instructive life stories and their lessons.

- *Integrity and honesty.* When did you see or experience the value or cost of honesty in leadership? Of dishonesty? Tell about the time you first realized the importance of personal integrity.
- *Commitment, reliability.* Tell a story about a time you enjoyed the reward of commitment, or when you or someone paid the cost of being unreliable.
- *Resiliency through adversity.* Recall a story in which you or someone you know learned to endure through

great difficulty. What principles have your experiences taught you for coming back stronger after a setback?

- *Creativity*. When have you or someone you know seen the value of creative thinking to find solutions that otherwise remained undiscovered? What made this creativity possible?
- *Relationships*. Tell a story about a relationship that was instrumental in your leadership success or growth. Tell about your most important relationships. What have your experiences taught you about building and sustaining valuable relationships?
- *Teams*. Tell about a time when people working together accomplished something that would otherwise have been impossible or of lesser quality. What methods do your life stories teach you for improving teamwork?
- *Leadership and followership*. When have you seen or practiced effective or ineffective leadership? Effective or ineffective followership? What principles have your experiences taught you about the impact of leaders on followers, and vice versa?
- *Success, failure, and mistakes*. Tell about one of your successes (or that of someone you know) and what it taught you. Tell about one of your (or another's) failures or mistakes and what you learned from it.
- *Strengths and weaknesses*. What were the circumstances in which you first discovered one of your strengths or weaknesses? Tell a story in which one of your strengths or weaknesses played a significant role. How have these experiences contributed to your philosophy for making the most of self-knowledge?

Mining Lessons from Your Unique Life Story

- *Experience, learning, and wisdom.* Tell about a time when you or someone you know benefited from past experience, learning, or acquired wisdom. What have your life stories taught you about best practices for acquiring experience, learning, and wisdom?
- *Self-care.* Describe circumstances in which you learned the importance of self-care. What areas and methods for self-care have you derived from your life experience?
- *Generosity and caring for others.* Tell a story in which you saw or practiced generosity or care for others (or when these were withheld or someone was mistreated).
- *Motivation, encouragement.* When did you discover the importance of motivation and encouragement in leadership? What have your experiences taught you about the ways you are best motivated? About best practices for motivating and uplifting others?
- *Vision, direction.* Tell about an experience in which you saw the value of leadership vision and direction. What principles for implementing vision and direction have you gained from your life stories?

Exploring Stories People Tell about You

We need other people to serve as mirrors in which we see ourselves. Different people will reflect different aspects of you, some more reliably than others, so the more widely varied such “mirrors” you consider, the more of yourself you will see and the more accurate the aggregate picture.

- What stories do friends, colleagues, and family tell about you?

Mining Lessons from Your Unique Life Story

- Which stories do you enjoy? Why?
- Which stories don't you appreciate? Why?

Exploring Stories You Admire from and about Others

We can learn not only from our own life stories but also from those of others. Furthermore, the practice of considering stories about other people, or the stories they tell, might trigger memories of related experiences in your past.

- Which stories do you admire about other people?
- Which admirable stories have you heard people tell about themselves or others?
- Which stories have inspired you? Why?
- Which stories resonate with you or seem to reveal something about you? Why?
- Do these bring to mind similar stories from your life experience?

Exploring Stories You Want to Live Into

You have a past, which can't be changed. You also have a future, which you can influence by your vision, values, priorities, and choices today.

- In ten years, what life stories do you want to be able to tell?
- What stories do you want friends and family to tell at your funeral?
- Tell a not-yet-true story that you want to make true and that will impact your children and grandchildren.

Mining Lessons from Your Unique Life Story

Or that will impact the next generation of leaders who know you.

- Write the epitaph you want on your gravestone. What future stories will ensure this will be true of your life?
- How will these target stories shape your future life and leadership?

APPENDIX A

Our 4:40 Review

Southwest Michigan First uses the following two-page form for team member reviews every forty days. You can read more about our process in chapter 10.

Our 4:40 Review

4:40												
name:	mentor partner:	date:										
Individual annual goals/updates	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></table>											
How are you doing against your goals?	<table border="1"><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr></table>											
What are your top 5 Gallup strengths and are you using them?	<table border="1"><tr><td>1.</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>2.</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>3.</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4.</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>5.</td><td></td></tr></table>		1.		2.		3.		4.		5.	
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What should I know?	<table border="1"><tr><td></td></tr><tr><td></td></tr></table>											
Four areas of focus/updates	<table border="1"><tr><td>1.</td></tr><tr><td>2.</td></tr></table>	1.	2.	<table border="1"><tr><td>3.</td></tr><tr><td>4.</td></tr></table>	3.	4.						
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Our 4:40 Review

		GOOD	BAD
How are you doing against your leadership-level responsibilities?	Profit and loss responsibilities	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
	Direct report to senior partner	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
	Lead staff/team members (including development team members)	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
	Public leadership/organizational spokesperson	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
	State and/or national profile as thought leader	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
	Innovating strategic organizational growth	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
	Assigned Board of Director relationships	○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
What do you need to succeed?			
How are you doing against your leadership-level responsibilities?	Meetings with assigned board members		
	Key issues		
	Percent attending meetings		
	Other comments		
Personal commitment			
	Name	Mentor Partner	

APPENDIX B

Lyn and Ron's Original Goals

Read chapter 19 for more about my and Lyn's goals (see also appendix C).

- Be able to buy more than one week's worth of toilet paper at a time.
- Be able to buy a tire without it being a crisis.
- Own a home nice enough to host the governor.
- Own a brand-new car.
- Have a career, not just a job.
- Have dinner at the White House.
- Own a boat.
- Have our kids never know scarcity.
- Own a ranch to hold big charity events. (It ended up being a lake house.)
- Shop at the grocery stores without needing coupons.
- Never divorce. (Twenty-nine years and counting)

APPENDIX C

Ron's Current Goals

- Have retirement fully funded by 12/31/2030.
- Serve on a board of a mid-sized company that does business nationally.
- Quail hunt three times per year.
- Have two fully committed vacations per year with Lyn.
- Have dinner at the White House.
- Own a second home in the South.
- Mentor fifty people who go on to lead their own organizations.
- Donate one hundred thousand cans of mandarin oranges to food banks.

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