



tim blair

the**leader**simple

the**leaders**simple

the way, truth, and life of leadership

Tim Blair

www.thelifesimple.com

To Howard, thanks for making it simple for me.

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Introduction.....	5
The Way.....	7
Embody the Way	9
Prepare the Way	11
Communicate the Way.....	14
Clear the Way.....	17
Reviewing What We've Learned about the Way.....	20
The Truth.....	21
Be the Truth.....	22
Know the Truth	26
Tell the Truth.....	29
Encourage the Truth	32
Reviewing What We've Learned about the Truth	35
The Life.....	36
Know the Life.....	39
Show the Life.....	44
Map the Life.....	47
Rescue to Life	52
Reviewing What We've Learned about the Life.....	55
theleadersimple.....	56
thebookssimple.....	58

INTRODUCTION

This book is based on one statement from an ancient writing in which Jesus of Nazareth gives us a glimpse into what He sees as the “bones” of leadership. There’s no silver bullet; business leadership, civic leadership, church leadership, parenting, marriage, and so on, are really just



a lot of hard work and common sense. However, success in these areas is hard work based on the right foundations. I believe the Bible gives these to us in the book of John in the New Testament, where Jesus responds to a question with this answer: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life . . .”

This is not really a religious book. I’m a big fan of the Bible and the teachings in it and am a believer, but I also read ancient Asian writings as well as not-so-ancient European and American writings from centuries back to gain insight

into life today through history. I'd like you to drop your guard for the short time it will take you to read this book, and let's see what this simple statement looks like in your skin. I'll try to put flesh on the bones so that we can show the way, tell the truth, and give life to those who follow us—no matter what position of leadership we carry with us.

A little about me: I've been in leadership positions for the past 3 decades. From real estate/property management to national retail, non-profits and start-ups, I've held the titles, general manager, VP, CFO, COO and president. I hope I can share with you what I've learned over the last 30 years, but more importantly what you can learn about being the **leader** simple.

THE **WAYS** SIMPLE

Have you ever had one of those moments where you just felt lost? If you haven't, you're extremely rare. Most of us, at some point, sit on the edge of our beds and wonder



why the heck we ever got out of bed. A few years back, I had one of those moments at work. A good friend walked into my office and could tell something was wrong, so he asked the obvious question: "What's wrong?" I mumbled a few incoherent things and then asked him to close the door. As he sat down, I said, "Have you seen that picture of

George Washington crossing the Delaware River?" He told me he had, so I went on: "That's what I need, someone standing up in the boat, pointing the way."

Now, I was recalling the painting from memory. Later, when I actually got a copy to hang on my office wall, I was surprised to see that General Washington was not actually

pointing the way; he was just standing in the boat, looking in the direction they were headed. However, if you've ever studied this painting you see that a



few officers are looking in the direction of the opposite shore and the rest of the crew are busying themselves with rowing, or pushing ice out of the way, or just trying to keep warm. It was enough that Washington knew where they were all going. No one else needed to be worried with that task.

In this first section we will cover the beauty of the **ways** simple.

EMBODY THE WAY

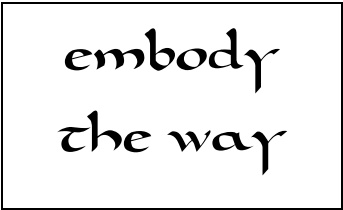
“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” This saying from ancient Jewish writings is a stark reminder of how important it is to show the “way.”

Thomas (you might know him as Doubting Thomas) starts Jesus down this whole line of discussion when Thomas responds to the announcement that Jesus is going away, and His followers can meet Him there at some later date because they know the way. Thomas says back, “We don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Isn’t this just like us? Details—we need details. Jesus doesn’t give a physical answer, but a spiritual answer: “I am the Way . . .” This takes me back to General Washington; as the future first president stands in the boat, he’s the embodiment of “the way.” No one has even the slightest question about where they’re going. One glimpse of him standing there and you know where you’re going.



To give a vision to your people, your family, or any follower, it must be clear and well communicated—but most of all, you must embody that vision.

This is not for the weak. You must be willing to stand your ground and die for what you believe in. There's no changing your mind halfway through the project. This requires relentless preparation.



embody
the way

PREPARE THE WAY

Rudy Giuliani has a book entitled *Leadership*. One of the topics in this book is “relentless preparation.” You cannot be an effective leader without relentlessly abandoning yourself to preparing. If you give a vision without adequate preparation, you’ll probably end up changing that vision because of something unforeseen. If you’re to communicate a vision to people, you better be prepared to back it up with details and how you’ve thought through everything.



One of the biggest frustrations I see with leaders of companies is that they often give a vision to their staff that they know has not been thought through. All of us understand that, at times, you have to turn the ship quickly to avoid pitfalls or react to changes. But for the big

projects or initiatives, you should share no vision until you've at least fleshed out the details to the point where you know the vision is solid. Never. A vision without preparation is a recipe for destroying confidence in leadership.

Think through your vision, and prepare for inevitabilities as well as the unknown as much as you can.

Scenario planning is one way you can make great headway in the preparation area of showing the way. Many books can give you guidelines and templates for scenario planning, so I won't go into that here. But you should look at the history of Shell Oil to get a good glimpse of what scenario planning can do for you.



prepare
the way

I won't give you the whole story here, but the team at Shell Oil did several scenarios of what the world supply of oil would look like in the future. The scenario that seemed most likely included an oil shortage that began with trouble in the Middle East. Through this scenario, the planners at Shell Oil recommended to company leadership to drill for oil in the North Sea, despite the cost of doing, so because the return on investment would be high when the Middle East oil crisis came. They were right, and it

paid off. It's a fascinating story that you should really take the time to read. I found the details in a book on business strategy, *The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World* by Peter Schwartz.

The one area of leadership that you can't afford to skip, or even skimp on, is preparation.

COMMUNICATE THE WAY

After preparation comes communication. Communicating the way is where vision takes on flesh. Dictionary.com defines vision as “a mental image produced by the imagination.” Until you convert that mental image into concrete

communication, it’s just a thought.

Through the relentless

preparation process, you should be able to completely

communicate what the vision is. Here’s a

test: if you can’t clearly communicate your vision, even in the midst of some hard questions, you haven’t done enough preparation. Here’s another test: if you call people “negative” when they ask questions about your vision that you can’t answer, you haven’t done enough preparation. Go back to the start, and don’t try to communicate vision without preparation. That would be like a five-year-old trying to fly a 747. The ground is hard, and it comes really fast.



You must be able to clearly articulate where you’re going and how you’re going to get there in order to effectively show people the way. Also, you cannot embody the way if

you don't know it yourself. Your staff, family, and volunteers need to know, with one look at you, that you know the way intimately. If they can't see this, you haven't done enough preparation. This is why leadership is so hard and not for the weak of will. Anyone can spout off a vision they've read in a magazine on a cross-country flight. It takes a true leader to take the time to prepare enough (and care enough for his or her people) to answer the tough questions. This takes time that you may feel you don't have.



communicate
the way

If you don't take the time up front, how much time will be wasted by your entire organization due to your lack of preparation and communication?

The biggest task in sharing vision is telling the truth—passionately. So many leaders I know are good speakers, but not good leaders. They know how to get a rise of emotion out of their staff through passionate pleas, but without the truth, it's just words. The more this happens, the less people listen. We'll spend more time on telling the truth later in the book, but at this first stage, truth is vitally important when you show people the way. Unless you tell the truth the vision is worthless. We need to see both sides and understand the exciting goals as well as the

dangerous pitfalls along the way. What are the downsides, and what are the upsides? Here's another test: if you don't see any downside or potential pitfalls, you haven't done enough preparation.

Truth and passion. *Veritas et fervidus*. I love putting phrases up on my wall to remind me of what I should be doing. It's the combination of these two that makes a good leader, great.

So, first you start with ample preparation for the way, and then you move to being truthful and passionate in communicating the way.

The final step to this first section is to Clear the Way.



CLEAR THE WAY

Now, I'm not talking again about making communication clear. I'm talking about clearing the way for people to get moving along the way. It's vitally important for you to remove as many obstacles as you can so that those who follow can make progress quickly. This may be under the



heading of resources, organization, location, or many other areas in which you can remove obstacles.

My brother Daniel has a doctorate in human performance technology from USC. He tells me that a main part of maximizing human performance in employees is removing the obstacles that hinder performance. Finding out what those obstacles are is

a full-time job for most human resources departments.


To effectively help people along the way you intend them to go, you must make sure the way is clear.

Part of this goes back to the relentless preparation in making sure that there won't be huge, unforeseen

roadblocks, and part of it comes with adjustments around your people, in the beginning and along the way.

My son is a skateboarder and works at an online skateboard company. Once in a while brings home a skate movie for us to see the incredible stunts that the skateboarders do off of big drop offs and down handrails and over walls and cars, etc. Now these guys are professionals at what they do and I'm always amazed at the obstacles they jump and how high they can get while catapulting over something in their way – all the while twisting and flipping their boards. It's pretty amazing.

Every once in a while on these videos though you get a quick look behind the scenes and see the horrendous crashes and outtakes where they didn't actually make that jump. It's pretty frightening and they often get really hurt. My son and his friends have had plenty of trips to the ER. We joke that they know his name! One thing the videos also show is how much time it sometimes



clear
the way

takes to prepare the area these skaters are skating. These guys bring out the brooms and walk the runs they are planning to do to remove any obstacles from their path. It's not part of the fun, but it is critical to get even the smallest rocks off the path as even a tiny pebble will cause a skater to do a faceplant!

The same is true in leadership. Unless you walk the path before you at least mentally to look for obstacles, those following you may end up on their faces with you beside them.

Now obviously you can't foresee every problem, but if you miss the obvious ones, your followers will question your judgement next time around.

REVIEWING WHAT WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT THEWAYSIMPLE

As you show the way to those around you, remember these four areas:

1. **Embody the Way** – Let people see that you're intimately involved in the vision and that they can trust that you won't change.
2. **Prepare the Way** – Make sure you do your homework and know that the way is the right way to go. Relentless preparation is a key to success.
3. **Communicate the Way** – *Veritas et fervidus*. Tell the truth passionately. Make sure your people see both sides, but they should also see your passion for the way.
4. **Clear the Way** – Foresee and remove any barriers or obstacles that could block progress. Be ready to step in should unforeseen obstacles come into play.

THE TRUTH SIMPLE

The bottom of my email signature has another Latin phrase: *ubi veritas, ibi fides*. It translates roughly to “where there is truth, there is trust.” I try to live by and firmly believe in this saying. I’ve had it on every email because I want to remind myself and others that you cannot have positive trust without truth. It can’t happen. I say “positive” trust because you can, for example, trust that if someone is talking, he’s lying. I know a few people like this.



My dad used to say that “they would lie when the truth sounded better.” This is not a positive trust; rather, it’s just knowing that you cannot trust. I do believe that you cannot build trust without first having the foundation of truth. Eventually, a relationship will crumble if truth isn’t part of the foundation.

Just as we show the way and embody the way to those who follow us, we have to take the next step to tell the truth to everyone who looks to us for leadership of any kind.

BE THE TRUTH

Let's go back to our painting of George Washington. While he's standing in the boat, embodying the way, he's also embodying the truth. One look and you know that what he's told you is everything there is to tell. Nothing hidden, no behind-the-scenes agendas. The truth. It's not revered much anymore—but when I was growing up, and for generations before me, the fable of George Washington cutting down the cherry tree and “fessing” up was a standard lesson for kids. Today, the truth in society is an option. Take a look at all the claims going through our legal system that are false or stretch the truth. Millions



are awarded on the basis of half truths and white lies. Worse, this is accepted as the norm. A man or woman of integrity who will tell the

truth at all costs is a rare find these days. Sensationalism in the media has numbed us to the truth. Most of us would have a hard time knowing the truth when it's told.

Being a leader with truth as your foundation isn't necessarily even prized in the workplace today. With all the layers of hierarchy in organizations, you can find yourself in a quandary as to what the real truth is. Entire companies like Enron can be destroyed overnight when the house of cards (or lies) finally folds. Along with these collapses goes the hard-earned money of many a stockholder. Yet, there are thousands of other businesses in the same boat that will continue building these unstable entities, just hoping to cash out before the fall.

be the truth

Lately there's been a call for ethics and integrity in

business. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article talked about ethics classes as part of MBA programs in U.S. universities. The article goes on to say that many professors and students don't believe in teaching ethics as a separate class, that it should be integrated into every class. Some characterize ethics classes as a bone thrown to the administration. Professors feel they can adequately cover ethics as they teach other subjects. One professor of Ethics at Harvard responds to this train of thought later:

Lynn Paine, the lead professor for the class, believes a stand-alone course is essential because "ethics discussion too easily gets crowded out" of other management courses. "The integration model sounds

good, but many faculty members have no training in ethics and the law and don't know how to incorporate them well," she says. "The odd thing about ethics is that people assume anyone can teach it because everyone faces ethical issues in life. But just because you shop, that doesn't mean you can teach marketing. (*Wall Street Journal*, April 12, 2005)

I firmly agree that these business students should learn ethics in a class of its own and not just a chapter in a book. But, they also should have already learned the lessons of ethics at home, in the school system, everywhere—truth



should be held up like a light in the darkness. Without it, there's no hope for the future. Once truth or ethics or integrity

becomes an upper-level college class, it's just another grade on the report card.

We need to teach and live the truth and not to expect that it happens without purposeful instruction.

This includes instruction within our families, but also in our businesses. You can't assume anymore that your followers know that it's OK to tell the truth. This is a sad, but true,

It's my goal to be known as a man of truth in this world of so many lies. I would love for my tombstone to read "He was a man of truth." That's also my hope and prayer for you, that people would see you standing up in the boat and know that you embody the truth.



Let me caution you here about one thing: unless the truth comes out of love, you'll fail. Truth without love is hollow and harsh. As I said about the way, if you don't love those around you, put down this book and get that straight first. Trying any of this, at home or in your workplace,

without a love for the people you contact will make a caricature of truth with no passion or desire to change yourself or others. Truth and love go together, as Forrest Gump would say, "like peas and carrots."

KNOW THE TRUTH

This is an area where I believe our current generation has taken huge strides backward. We no longer teach truth; instead, we teach theory and tolerance. Truth is an unknown in so many areas today where it was in concrete fifty to seventy years ago. It's difficult to discern truth anymore, which is why our society is falling apart morally. Truth is a question: "whose truth?"

So how do you get to know the truth in a way that makes a difference? I remember hearing about how many banks train their employees to be so familiar with real \$100 bills that they're able to quickly spot a fake one. I believe this is applicable in any situation. You must familiarize yourself with the truth—you must get to know it.



In business, this means being a student of everything. Know your numbers, know your people, know your market, your competition, your strategy, your brand—the list is endless and overwhelming, which is why you must surround yourself with people who you not only trust to be committed to you, but who will also search out the truth and be willing to share it liberally.

know
the truth

Never, never, never commit the unpardonable sin of a leader and squelch the truth from someone who is brave

enough to give it to you. Once you do, it will be harder for that person to give you the truth the next time. After years of this, you'll never hear the truth in your company.

Truth, above all, must be held in a place of honor, and people must feel honored if they share it—especially if it's difficult.

I know what you're thinking, because I see it often: you have people in your business who share opinions as if those opinions are truth. How you deal with them is critical, and this is why you must be familiar with the truth yourself. You cannot rely one hundred percent on others to feed you the truth.

This takes us back to relentless preparation before you even get this far. If you know where you're going, at a detailed level, you should know the truth like the back of your hand.

SPEAK THE TRUTH

On a fateful day in January 1986, thousands of school children, office workers, and everyday Americans cheered



the Space Shuttle Challenger as it lifted off its launch pad and vaulted into the sky. It soon became apparent that something was dreadfully wrong as the spacecraft

exploded in the sky and fell back to the earth, killing all aboard. In subsequent reports and analysis, it became clear that the responsibility for this disaster lay with the Group Decision Support System (GDSS) of NASA and a small o-ring in the fuel system. They determined that this awful event could have been avoided with better feedback systems and clearer lines of communication.

While most of the decisions we make as leaders aren't life and death, they follow the same need for reliability and communication of clear feedback. Truth. I have a good friend who's a consultant to a lot of businesses and has done some consulting with my current employer. He tells me that the higher you climb in an organization, the less

you personally hear about the organization. It's vitally important that you set up feedback mechanisms to enable a good flow of truth from the organization to you. It's also vitally important that you set up feedback channels from you to your followers or staff. From a human resources perspective, this could be a review, but this should not be your only opportunity for feedback.

Telling the truth to those around you—about yourself, about them, about what's going on and projects you're involved in—is the most critical factor to success in any situation.

Think of this in a marriage. Fifty percent of all marriages in the U.S. fall apart. While there are many reasons for this, I believe a majority of the less volatile breakups could be avoided if there were ample opportunities for spouses to speak the truth to each



speak
the truth

other. What happens most of the time is that communication breaks down, truth is not shared, and eventually the problems become so large that they seem impossible to solve. For this reason alone, couples should take the time to sit and talk daily so that truth has a chance to come out. While it won't solve every marriage problem and some people in marriages will never get to

the truth, at least there's an opportunity. It's critical that truth is a hallmark of the communication between husband and wife and between leaders and followers.

This really breaks down into loving people more than you love ideas. No one should be afraid of telling you anything. No one should be afraid of coming to you with difficult information. Why? They should know that you love them more than you love ideas or projects or companies. How will they know this? It should be obvious and



consistent. If you don't love the people around you, close this book and move on. None of it will make any difference at all unless you love. Everything hangs on this principle. Until you understand this, the rest is just talk. However, if you do understand this, feedback to those around you will be much easier because they'll know you have their best interests in mind. Truth will also come back the other way.

ENCOURAGE THE TRUTH

The most important thing you can do is to encourage the truth in all your relationships. No hidden agendas. Let the plan be known to everyone involved. It's also vitally important that you set some boundaries in work relationships. Telling the truth at the beginning will make it easier to tell the truth in the middle and at the end, should the end come. Tell the truth about yourself, and tell the truth about your expectations.

When you tell the truth about yourself, don't hold back and don't try to be something you're not. I've had a lot of bosses who just know that "this time it's gonna be different." If you have a problem with feedback, or with



focus, or with boundaries, let it be known. How I wish I could have helped some of my bosses elicit the feedback they wanted, instead of

watching them try so hard to get to the truth on their own. If you know that you tend to candy-coat things with employees or that you're overly harsh, tell them that in

the beginning. Letting them find out over two or three years is cruel and unusual punishment.

If you see weaknesses that you think can be overcome in certain employees, let them know the first day on the job that you're going to work hard to shore up those weaknesses. You'll be very surprised to see them accept this with gratefulness, because they know their weaknesses—and the fact that those weaknesses are out in the open will keep the people from trying to hide or overcompensate for them.

*encourage
the truth*

As soon as you see an issue, tell the truth. Don't try to work around it or enlist the help of others to "double

team" someone with whom you have an issue. Be up front and open, and if you need to enlist the help of others, let that also be in the open.

Get these things in writing. We often hesitate to write down and file the areas we're working on with followers. Do it—and make a copy for them to keep. An email might work if it's electronically filed and can be retrieved easily. If it's an email, make sure it's acknowledged by an email response from the other person—and keep that response handy. When you talk through progress and give

feedback, go back to the source and check the email, just to make sure time hasn't clouded or changed the expected outcome.

Demand the truth back from employees. We've covered this in the feedback area, but I just want to drive home the point. If your followers don't feel comfortable enough with you to tell you the truth, they won't. You must be the open door for them.

You must encourage, and even reward, true feedback. If you don't, it won't come.

One caveat: be careful not to engender a culture of gossip. If employees come to you with their version of the truth



about others that they heard through “the grapevine”—or even firsthand in seemingly confidential

conversations—cut out that cancer as quickly as possible. If people come to you and start with “I’m not supposed to tell you this,” stop them right there and ask why they’re telling you.

How they react will give

you the answer you need as to whether it’s truth or gossip.

REVIEWING WHAT WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT THE TRUTH SIMPLE

Be the Truth – Strive to be known as a person of truth. This will do more for your success in every aspect of life than almost any other thing you could do. Tie truth to love, and you'll have a mixture that will make you successful as a leader.

Know the Truth – Once again, you must relentlessly prepare to know what is true and what isn't. Draw people around you that you trust to tell you the truth, and reward them for it. Know the truth like the back of your hand.

Feedback the Truth – Truth laced with liberal amounts of love can be painful, but it will always build respect and open the door to success for those under your leadership. Hiding the hard stuff from your staff, students, or children will not help them grow—and it will not make you successful as a leader.

Encourage the Truth – Reward those who are truthful with you. Years of trust can be torn down in seconds if you react to the truth with anger. Be careful not to engender a “gossip” culture by refusing to listen to hearsay.

A quote from a *Washington Post* survey will help us begin this topic:

James Lindow, a Green Bay, Wisconsin, Warehouse Operations Manager says: “Your kids are going to the day care, or wherever they are taken care of by somebody else. By the time you get done with your job, you’ve got to rush home and make supper, do whatever, and then you



have to run your kids somewhere else. You don’t get enough time to spend with your wife anymore, either, because you are both working. You’re lucky if you get to see your wife one or two hours a day. What kind of quality time is that?”

One of the biggest problems I see in business today is overload. People work sixty to seventy hours a week and give everything they have to their work. They come home, crash on the sofa with a glass of wine and a Lean Cuisine, and they fall asleep—only to do it again the next day. Where is the life in this? How can it continue for years and years without taking a considerable toll on a person? Do those of us who own the business even know this is



happening? Are we encouraging it to save on payroll or to engender loyalty?

In a 2004 Harris Interactive poll taken before Labor Day, nearly 66 percent of employees surveyed said their workload had increased. Almost 50 percent said that they didn't feel rewarded for this, and around 10 percent said they were working ten

hours more per week than six months prior. We, as leaders, aren't doing our jobs well when statistics like this

are prevalent. While it may be important for the business to get more productivity out of less, it's the leader's job to make sure he or she isn't sucking the life out of employees.

Let's talk about the critical areas of life for those you lead, and we'll see if we can come to an agreement on how to give life to those around you.

KNOW THE LIFE

One of the biggest mistakes I see in corporate America is what I call “mirroring.” Many of us in leadership roles expect our subordinates to “mirror” our own way of living. “If I live and breathe work 24/7, so should others.” “I work seventy hours a week and still have time for my family and a few hobbies.”

What we don’t see is how our lives have changed over the last ten to fifteen years. Most upper-level leaders have no small children at home. Most have significant equity in their business. Most have enough money to hire help for house cleaning, gardening, and other day-to-day tasks. They dry-clean instead of wash. They eat out more often. They don’t have to go to soccer matches and baseball games three days a week. There’s no early-morning band practice. We’ve lost track of what life is like for our employees. It’s hectic and hurried, with few moments for



relaxation. Burnout happens. How do you combat this growing problem?

I think we, as leaders have at times, short-term memory loss—we've forgotten what it's like to nurse a child back from sickness for two nights straight, then try to come to work and be productive for eight hours, knowing all the time that the next child is getting the same thing and the cycle will start again tonight. Those of us who are out of this have it easy, and they seem to forget what it takes to raise kids—if we ever really knew at all.



For leaders, it's a matter of caring to know. You can't just assume that you "own" your employees for the time they sit at their desks and that they can shut off everything else in their lives during work hours. You must understand that your people aren't balanced and are probably overloaded in other areas of their lives. You're the only person in their lives who can know what their needs are and help them work at "being" instead of "balancing."

Let me give you a very personal example of this. In 2005, my wife and I found out that our eighteen-year-old son was suffering from a very deep depression. It was an awful and fearful time for our whole family as we worked through this. During this difficult time, my CEO understood the weight I was under and helped me “be” what I needed to be at home by allowing me to take off every Thursday afternoon to spend some quality time with my son. This may not seem like much when I was still working ten hours most other days, but there were always appointments and errands and emergencies that took up other time during work hours, so it felt to me like it was

know
the life

too much to ask at the time. By giving me the freedom to go golfing or see a movie or just sit and talk with my son for a few hours every week, I

felt like being good at home and at work was something I could grasp. Of course, I didn’t just spend Thursdays with my son and no other time, but that was time that we both committed to as being important above all else.

Now there are seasons during the work year when I put in inordinate amounts of time when necessary (I’m currently on a seventeen-hour flight to Hong Kong for a week of fifteen-hour workdays). You can’t fight balance forever. The important point here is that unless you’re willing to

help your team in their whole lives by understanding what that means for each individual, true balance for them will probably not happen because they're the only ones who know their needs.

Does this always work? No. Sometimes the load is too heavy, and eventually something will break. Before that happens, you must come to an agreement with your people that the situation is untenable and there's no way to make the situation work. If your company has a sabbatical program, that might be an option. But for most of us, it could mean a leave of absence or severing the work relationship for a time.

Whatever the outcome, it's the leader's responsibility to know employees well enough to see the breaking point coming.



It's also critical that leaders have only as many people under them that they can know well. I firmly believe, and it's well documented in

organizational management books, that leaders can effectively manage only six to eight people. Beyond that,

there's not enough time in the week to manage and know your people. I'm not talking about assembly line-type jobs, where a line manager might have thirty people on the line. I'm talking about office positions with non-repetitive duties. Once you get past that level of six to eight managed people, you don't have the time or the energy to know your people and understand their individual needs.

Leaders must know what life looks like for their followers, and they must know their staff's lives intimately enough to be able to make as many changes as possible to render those lives less stressful. This really isn't that hard—all it takes is some time and good ears to hear what's going on around you.

SHOW THE LIFE

It is important for leaders to emulate or show the life. If I see that my boss is willing to give up a little work time to go see his grandson perform at school, I'll know it's OK for me to do the same. If I, as a leader, never let my people see that I have a life outside of work, they may never understand how I would be OK with their lives outside of work.

What does this mean for us? We need to actually have lives outside of work. If I'm sending emails to people at 7:00 on a Saturday night




or 2:00 on a Sunday afternoon, what does that tell them? This guy lives and breathes work 24/7. If it happens every weekend and every evening, the expectation is set in employees' minds that this is what their lives should also be like.

If you have to work on weekends or just can't let go, schedule your emails to go out during the week. Your

employees don't check on the weekend anyway, so it won't hurt to postpone delivery for a few hours.

Empathy is a key here. If you, as a leader, have had children or have children, empathize with your people. A big caveat here: it isn't always a good idea to give your staff advice or tell them what you did in a similar situation. People don't always want, and sometimes aren't ready for, a quick solution to their problems. If you tell people how to fix a tough situation every time they're going through something, more often than not,



show
the life

they'll stop telling you. Why is this? Most of the time, people know the solutions to their problems, and all they really want is some empathy or sympathy. To take it to a personal level, they don't need to be "fixed," they need to be understood. Let your people know that you understand—or if you don't understand, at least let them know that you feel bad about what they're going through.

Be generous with empathy and stingy with anecdotes.

While it's vital for your people to see that you have a life inside and outside of work, be careful not to rub their noses in your health, wealth, and freedom. Most will understand that you're the boss and you deserve the privileges of being the boss, but few want to be reminded

of the status difference on a daily basis. A good parking space, a nice car, a big office—these are all understandable, but showing a PowerPoint presentation of your recent vacation to New Zealand where you took a limo out to see the wallabies frolic while sipping champagne is probably over the edge. Enough said.



In essence, make sure your staff sees you emulate “being” in your life. If you don’t have it, perhaps a look into your own life, by mapping your hours, could help you see where you can get some time. If you’re at the breaking point, it’s time to sit down with your boss, if you have one (if not, sit down with your spouse or a good

friend or counselor), and walk through what it will take to get you away from the breaking point and into a better work/life arrangement. I think most of us would be surprised at how our bosses react when we need this type of change. I’ll bet there are very few bosses out there who wouldn’t understand and work with you to fix the issues that are causing the stress.

MAP THE LIFE

Planning. Wow, it always comes down to this one word when working with people. Leading is no different—leaders need to have a plan.

As a leader, I have personally experienced how easy it is to have people work for you for years and not let them know where they're going in the company. Many employees don't ask, and many leaders don't tell.



Obviously it depends on your employees or those whom you lead, but most of the people, most of the time, want a vision for their jobs. Without vision, people perish. And without vision, companies perish. So here's where it gets a little tough and takes more work that you're probably aware you need to give. Map

out a plan of success for your people—each one of them—and keep it up to date, review it periodically, and assess where you are on the plan.

Here's where another big caveat comes in: if you don't have a company vision and you haven't mapped out what success looks like for the organization, you can't get there with employees either. There's a good reason for this.

Sometimes the organizational vision conflicts with what you want for your people and/or what your staff want for themselves individually. If you



map
the life

know that the company's vision is to start outsourcing, helping a staff member train in a particular skill that's going to be outsourced would be foolish—especially if the employee doesn't know! This may seem simplistic, but it's amazing how many times I've seen managers let employees move toward goals that are out of alignment with the organizational vision.

Take the time to set the company vision and communicate it well before you map out success for any staff members.

First things first. Now, this isn't a book on corporate vision or strategic planning, so you'll have to get advice on that somewhere else. It isn't too difficult, just a little time-consuming.

To map out success for a follower, just use the same terms we've been discussing through this whole book—the way, the truth, the life.

When communicating with your individual staff members about the way for them, you need to listen more than talk. Most of the time, you'll discover amazing things about your staff when you listen—experience they bring to the table that wasn't on their résumés, hobbies that could easily relate to success on the job, desires you had no idea they felt. Find out what the way looks like



to them, and then align that with your corporate strategy. Set out steps for them to get there and times to measure progress. Add this to the review process we discussed earlier. Since we spent a fair amount of time on this earlier, I won't belabor that point. Create a path for success by starting out with the way.

Tell your staff the truth here also. Some of them won't have a clear vision of their strengths and abilities. Most people can't see themselves clearly without some help.

I've recommended a book on self-deception in the appendix; it's a short but powerful read to help you and your staff recognize this weakness. Personality testing is a real help here. I'm a big fan of Myers-Briggs testing, which is easily accessed online. Doing this with a team can be a lot of fun as well as help the team work better together. Be careful not to pigeonhole people; talking through strengths by using a tool like this can be very helpful in mapping out a plan for success. It's much easier to grow your strengths than it is to shore up your weaknesses. In fact, one school of thought says that trying to compensate personally for a lack of certain strengths is a waste of time.

While you're mapping out success, jump into what success off the job looks like for those you lead. It could be that a shortened work week or time to earn an advanced degree would benefit both the employee and the business. And it could be that it helps to just know the boss cares for the whole person.



Just remember to touch on all three points—the way, the truth, and the life—when you communicate. That’s what I want you to see here. It’s a simple and effective way to make sure you touch all the bases when you map out a plan for success with your people. This is one of the most critical and important things you can do for them—and for yourself as a leader. If you do this for all your employees, your productivity will skyrocket and, more importantly, those you lead will be better for it.

RESCUE TO LIFE

Finally, in this area of “the life,” you need to look to help or rescue employees that are in trouble personally. In a study by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Analysis, more than 18% of Americans



experience alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some time in their lives. A research paper by the National Institute for Mental Health: “The Numbers Count: Mental Illness in America”, shows that “depressive disorders affect approximately 18.8 million American adults or about 9.5% of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year.” It doesn’t matter what your business is and how good you are at helping your employees have lives, there are times when you may need to rescue your employees out of an untenable situation. Know the signs

for depression, burnout, alcoholism, and other reactions to stress and emotional difficulties—this is critical for anyone who leads people. Some people can hide this for quite some time before you see the signs, but eventually, if you’re paying attention, it will come.

Unless you know the road signs, you won’t be aware of many problems. Now obviously, I can’t list here everything to look for in every employee in every situation, but I can wake you up to the fact that you have to pay attention and you need to do a little reading on what to watch for. Depression is an epidemic in the U.S., especially in the

*show
the life*

young. In any given year, 7 percent—or between thirteen and fourteen million people—will experience a depressive disorder,

and this figure is over 8 percent in kids. Suicide is the third-leading cause of death between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, and there really isn’t a whole lot being done about it other than medicating people. While depression can usually be traced to a chemical imbalance, the sooner it’s caught, the better.

If you have a lot of young staff in your organization, be ready. Have qualified counselors to whom you can refer troubled staff, and read up a bit on the signs and symptoms of depression. You can’t diagnose, but you can be aware and possibly rescue some of your staff to life.

This advice also applies to drugs and alcohol abuse, abusive relationships, and other issues that can take out a staff member. You can't be an expert, and you're probably not a medical professional, so don't try to be one. But you can be aware and be available to talk should the occasion arise.



REVIEWING WHAT WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT THELIFESIMPLE

Know the Life – Learn what “being” looks like in your life and in your employees’ lives. Take the time to get to know what your employees need to live more productive and successful lives, at work and at home. Don’t be afraid to ask employee what life looks like to them.

Show the Life – Be careful not to ask your people, even subliminally, to “mirror” your balance between work life and home life. Remember that your life may be vastly different from the lives of those you lead. Model good living for your employees.

Map the Life – Help your employees see what success looks like using the basic model of the way, the truth, and the life. Lay out a plan for them that takes into account their entire knowledge base, rather than just what they know about their current jobs and skill sets needed for those jobs.

Rescue to Life – Recognize the warning signs for those big problems that your staff may face. Educate yourself about the basics of depression and substance abuse so that you can at least recognize when problems may exist. Have professional contacts available for referrals should the need arise.

THE LEADER SIMPLE

Leading anything or anyone is not for the faint of heart. The world needs a heck of a lot more followers than leaders, so leading also isn't for everyone. It shouldn't be something that frightens you, though. After all, you never lead by yourself. That's impossible—there's always



someone behind you, following, supporting, and ready to help if you're even a marginally capable leader. In fact, the less capable you feel you are to lead (some might call this humility), the greater chance you have of someone wanting

to help you in the process.

If you feel called to lead in any capacity—whether in business, family, civic life, or wherever you're placed—fear not. There's one concept that I've waited until now to share with you: love. Leading with love is the foundation of way, truth, and life leadership. I love to write haiku-

style poetry now and then. Condensing thoughts to seventeen syllables helps you focus on the essence of what you're trying to say. I wrote this a couple of years ago, and I try to come back to it every once in a while. It reminds me that while leadership as a concept can be frightening, leading through love will drive the fear out.



No fear can subsist
Encamped with a
perfect love
It shrinks from the
fire

We need to love the people we lead. In a real sense, love isn't something you do, it's something you are. Once you get that, you will be on the way, truth and life of the **leader** simple.

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