

Foreword

This book is all about becoming a happy, balanced, thriving person who lives a meaningful life. Not coincidentally, this is the kind of person who makes a great leader.

Interestingly, the heart and soul of leadership have not changed in the past 50 years. I have found that the qualities and traits that create the kind of person who inspires others to follow and brings out the best in them are the same qualities and traits they've always been. In an age of dizzying change, I find it very reassuring to know that some things remain steadfast!

As a private equity investor who partners with companies to support long-term growth, I am incredibly interested in the subject of what great leaders look like. In fact, I will invest only in companies whose leadership teams are made up of balanced, thriving people.

It's my belief that no organization can thrive over time, financially or otherwise, without a subset of fundamentally good people at the top, people who care about those they work with and sincerely want to help develop them. The deep-rooted goal of such leaders is to build a strong business that serves the customer, the employees, and the owners—and they wake up each morning with that in mind.

In his classic book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins writes extensively about getting the right people on the bus. By this, he means leaders who are humble but also driven to do what's best for the company. Collins's book is a wonderful, empirically based work that explores how to use these "right people" to create great companies. It's a valuable resource. But what Collins doesn't really address is how to develop the leaders themselves.

That's where *The Circle Blueprint* steps in. Where Collins veers "right" into the business side of this topic, Jack Skeen, Greg Miller, and Aaron Hill veer "left" into the personal development arena.

Becoming a balanced "whole person" starts with self-awareness. In my experience, most people really aren't self-aware. That's why I'm pleased to say that this thoughtfully organized book; the proprietary,

scientifically validated assessment; and the accompanying workbooks are all aimed at creating that self-awareness—a necessary first step to becoming a great leader.

The program then provides a very specific framework to help leaders move on from their new place of self-awareness and work to become balanced, fulfilled, successful human beings.

This framework is quite comprehensive, and in my mind that's what makes the program unique and valuable. Too many leader development programs are random, scattershot, and generalized. When you're a leader participating in such a program, you really don't know where your "problem areas" lie and therefore can't possibly know where to focus your improvement efforts.

The Circle Blueprint approach measures the right things, gives specific feedback on how you're wired and how you can best align to the world around you, and offers practical guidance for moving forward on your journey. Plus, you can start from exactly where you are in terms of both how well you've mastered the crucial elements of the Circle and where you are in your career.

When I saw the four developmental areas that Jack, Greg, and Aaron focused on in their book—*independence*, *power*, *humility*, and *purpose*—I was quite pleased. They resonated with me in terms of both my own journey and the qualities I see in the leaders I work with every day.

I also like that they get to the heart of what the traits and concepts really mean. Over time, the perception people have about these words has shifted, and most of us have the wrong idea about their original meaning.

Take *independence*. People think it means being self-sufficient—able to pay your bills, make your own decisions, forge your own destiny. But what it really means is being totally free from the need to please others or win their approval. You're free to do what *you* believe is right, not what someone else thinks is right. This is a rare trait, but it is essential to being a great leader.

I have found that when people lack independence, they also lack self-confidence. They can't act decisively. Such people might be good managers, but they can never be great leaders.

The authors say that if you don't possess true independence you'll never be able to tap into your true *power*. This is another area

where most people lose their way. They focus on the conventional definition, which centers on attaining and exerting power, rather than seeking to discover it within themselves. True power should be viewed as your own unique, special skill that makes you good at what you do.

We all have a power center. Some people find it. Others never do. And still others find it and use it in destructive ways. While often powerful, these folks are not great leaders.

Next comes *humility*. Many leaders struggle with this area. They seem to have a fundamental misunderstanding about how leaders “should” behave and present themselves. People in my generation tend to think that leaders must be dominant, commanding figures.

I have found the opposite is true. The leaders who inspire the most confidence in others are those who listen five times more than they speak, who don’t have an overinflated view of their own importance, who don’t mind admitting they don’t have all the answers.

The fourth developmental area is *purpose*. I believe that in most instances, this is more of a personal trait than a corporate one. Purpose-driven for-profit enterprises are rare. On the other hand, there are many leaders who have a strong internal sense that they are working toward a purpose greater than themselves—and these leaders are quite powerful.

In the past, a company’s “purpose” was usually discussed in the context of making money. However, this mindset has shifted a bit over the last couple of decades. The most successful newer businesses like Apple, Amazon, and Uber are built on the notion of addressing a human need in a new way—a purpose envisioned by someone who saw the world differently.

I’d like to close by saying that this book comes at the right moment in time. There is a growing need for great leaders to help organizations navigate the tumultuous waters of today’s marketplace and economy. And for individual leaders there is also a great need—to perform well and improve quickly.

The reality is that we can no longer wait until we’re 50 years old with a lifetime of experience under our belt to operate at the top of our game. Things simply move much faster now, and expectations are much higher. And that’s why the program described in this book is so valuable—it gives companies a way to know how their leaders

are developing and gives leaders a set path to follow as they forge ahead on their journey.

This is not just a business issue. Far from it. It's a matter of physical, emotional, and spiritual health as well. In the middle of so much uncertainty—with the old ways and old rules giving way to new paradigms and new ways of working and living—we owe it to ourselves to become the best, happiest, most fulfilled, contented, and successful human beings possible.

We all know people who are financially successful but unhappy and dysfunctional. Yet the good news is that we live in a time of ever-increasing awareness about the value of happiness and peace. More and more people are realizing that *enduring* is no longer enough. We deserve better. No matter where we are in our careers, we want happy lives, healthy relationships, and a sense of purpose and meaning.

We owe it to ourselves and the people around us to not merely survive but to thrive—and *The Circle Blueprint* offers us a way to get there.

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