

Leverage Your Best, Ditch The Rest

A presentation by

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Synopsis by Rod Cox

"Would you like to change your life within 24 hours? Radically improve the quality of your personal and workplace satisfaction? You don't need a transplant or life makeover. A little shift here and there can have phenomenal impact."

Blanchard says that tiny yet crucial shifts can spell the difference between "getting by" or being effective in business and life. *"You can eliminate the stupid stuff that distracts you and gets in your way. You can capitalize on what you've got going for you and invest in yourself."*

Blanchard addresses these key business and personal leadership topics:

- The power of radical self-acceptance
- Three perspectives or questions that provide a frame of reference about how we are perceived, our own self image and our self-imposed limitations
- Why our needs will always get met and how to increase the odds that this will be positive
- How to recognize and ditch the tolerations that stress us and keep us from performing well

Because *Leverage Your Best, Ditch The Rest* focuses on individual actions – what you can do yourself – it doesn't require organizational buy-in to implement. But it can generate a profound cultural shift as you and your colleagues become more effective by building on your strengths. If you are interested in personal and business development as well as life satisfaction, this is one synopsis that you should keep at hand and refer to often.

Scott Blanchard speaks with conviction, honesty, and excitement about the infinite possibilities of success for individuals as well as their organizations. He is an accomplished corporate trainer and passionate champion of coaching in the workplace. Scott co-founded Coaching.com™, a Web-enabled corporate coaching and personal development service that offers advanced, accessible, and research-driven services. His personal philosophy is based on the fundamental principle of leadership: *great leaders do not succeed by doing what they are good at: they succeed by getting things done with and through others.*

Scott is senior vice president of The Ken Blanchard Companies, an internationally recognized management, leadership training and consulting firm based in San Diego, California. As a senior consulting partner for more than six years, he had led major training interventions and worked with numerous *Fortune* 500 companies including Anthem BlueCross and BlueShield, Sprint, KPMG, Black & Decker, Siemens, General Motors, Honda, NBA, Eastman Kodak, WorldCom, and Wachovia. Scott was educated at Cornell University and received his master's degree in organizational development from American University in Washington, D.C.

This Executive Forum presentation is based on *Leverage Your Best, Ditch the Rest*, Scott Blanchard and Madeleine Homan, 2004.

Scott Blanchard, the son of Ken Blanchard (*The One Minute Manager*), grew up in a household that dealt with infractions by discussing how the behavior was incongruent with family values and where the behavior would take the miscreant; i.e., he was raised by the principles that are involved in the world of leadership coaching. It was an effective model, recognizing strengths as well as being respectful to weaknesses.

The focus in the Blanchard household and in leadership coaching is to provide people with a safe environment to become "engaged" with their lives and to move forward. It has been proven that engaged employees are more productive in every way. In study after study, the number one employee satisfaction item is his/her relationship with the employer. Since this is so well understood, what is keeping people from being good managers? Why are they not acting on their intentions?

In this presentation, Blanchard discusses several key concepts to get you started.

Radical Self-Acceptance

The negative judgments we have of ourselves impede our development. Only when we hold ourselves up as whole, complete and perfect, can we initiate change. *"We are in a position to leverage our strengths to the point that our weaknesses become irrelevant."*

Dr. John Gottman, *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail*, defines a successful marriage as *"two people who stay together and sorta like each other."* He found that very often successful marriages include key conversations: "Honey, you're perfect. I love your strengths as well as the other things, too. You need no changes. So please change." The "perfect" condition provides an environment that is open, safe and receptive to developing each person and enhancing the relationship.

This is quite different from giving feedback. Too often, people think they are giving feedback as a "gift" when what they are really doing is expressing a desire to have us meet their needs. As Gottman notes, it is far more effective to give and receive clear information that is useful at that moment. This requires that you profoundly accept who you are and who the other person is.

We unconditionally love our children. So what's keeping us from giving unconditional love to ourselves? What would happen if we saw ourself as whole and complete? What would change?

Consider becoming your own coach whose only agenda in life is to see your client succeed. Note that the only person keeping you from accepting yourself as whole and complete is . . . yourself. What would it take for you to drop the "shoulds" and the "musts" that are getting in your way? Making this shift is critical because implementing change from a position of perfection is much more effective than from a position of imperfection.

Children have a wonderful ability to see themselves as whole and complete, but they start editing themselves at about age six when they become aware of societal expectations. At this time, they often commit their "first error" – a profound shift in the way they see themselves – which may set the stage for life-long issues. Sometimes the "error" is being told or self-observing that they are mean or messy or disobedient or slow. "She's shy" can be a self-fulfilling prophesy. Often the error or deficiency becomes a serious point of conversation and identification for them, their families, their teachers and their peers. When these messages instill themselves into a child's subconscious, it triggers a shift in their relationship with themselves, and that is too bad. It sets them up for having no safe place to let things go and gets in the way of building their self-image on a foundation of being whole and complete, even perfect.

In business, effective management can provide that place.

Relationships

Management is the development of people, not the development of things. *"Of all management skills, the most essential is the ability to build relationships that build people."* This is closely aligned to Emotional Intelligence (EQ).

Relationships are built around what we feel, believe and remember. Some people, including leaders, are equipped with an innate sensibility to relationships; others have to work on them. Good leaders never forget that they're always on stage. *"Every time you engage in a relationship, you're on stage."* (In the home, this is known as Daddy/Mommy watching.) But all great leaders see a balance in reflection and action. They:

- create compelling visions for themselves and others
- create meaning through their communications
- create trust through their actions over time (congruence)
- have a positive self-regard and profoundly understand themselves. They know how to leverage their strengths, and have plans and action to mitigate their weaknesses. (Chapter 3)
- pass these on to their people

Does this sound like a description of a coach, not a manager? It should. Good managers are good coaches. They recognize that their colleagues are already perfect; i.e., *"they are the perfect result of everything that has ever happened in their lives:*

- *whole and complete, as they should be.*
- *the result of every action taken and every action taken to them."*

Good management and good coaching comes from freely using an intentional process of structured conversation:

- The relationship is based on radical self-acceptance, with an agenda of helping the client be the best "he" he can be.
- The process is simple and elusive. It often includes a precise objective; a tangible end to strive for, a recognition of the gap in between, and a plan for closing the gap. The questions are: *"Where are you? Where do you want to go? What are the landmines in between? How are you going to overcome them?"* (See Three Perspectives, below)
- All of the questions are "what" questions, and none of them are "why" questions. "Why" goes down a rat hole. "What" moves forward. Coaching is about moving forward, not looking back. Thus, the coach will say, "What is this costing you? What would it look like if it were fixed? What is it worth to you?"

Note that coaching – whether you're doing it yourself or have professional assistance – is for people who are ready for coaching, and who want to get out of where they are and go where they want to be. Be sure to determine this before you coach yourself or someone you care about.

Three Perspectives

Do you hold yourself in high regard? If not, why not? What is important to you, and what is not? Do you know or care about how others see you? As mentioned above, the capacity to build and nurture relationships is the single best predictor of leadership success, so how you see yourself is critically important. What is the gap between your intent and your actions? How do you want to be seen?

Consider addressing these questions from three perspectives:

First, **how do you see yourself?** A good starting place is to recognize that you're no better or worse than anyone else. Dr. Jennifer James (cultural anthropologist) has found that across all cultures self-esteem is influenced by four factors: fate, early experiences with adults, life experiences and our opinions of ourselves. Opinions are critical: siblings raised in virtually the same environment may live their lives in radically different ways. The difference is in how they interpret the story of their lives. *"While life's experiences may affect us greatly, the strongest effect on us as human beings is the perceptions and beliefs we have about the things that occur in our lives."*

Second, **how do others see you?** This provides you with valuable information about how you affect the people around you. *"The number one indicator of success in life, and especially in business, is the capacity to build and leverage relationships. The essence of that capacity is the experience others have when they interact with us. You don't need to be all things to all people . . . but you do need to understand how people see you so that you can find the best way to be effective with them."*

And third, **how do you want to be seen?** *"Costs can mount if the gap between how we want to be seen and how we are actually seen gets too big."* Are you sending the messages you want to send? Are they being received intact?

The Three Perspectives				So what now?
<i>How I see myself. (Inside out)</i> <i>I know myself to be:</i>	<i>How others see me.* (Outside in)</i> <i>1 = not at all</i> <i>5 = absolutely</i>	<i>How I want to be seen.</i> <i>What is the gap?</i>	<i>Does the gap matter?</i>	<i>What am I going to do about it?</i>
1.	1 2 3 4 5	big med small none	yes no	
2.	1 2 3 4 5			
3.	1 2 3 4 5			
4.	1 2 3 4 5			
5.	1 2 3 4 5			
Action #1:				By when?
Action #1:				By when?
Action #1:				By when?

* Note: Close connections may see you differently than casual connections. Consider "How Others See Me" from both perspectives.

Not a perspective, but nevertheless a crucial element, is deciding what you are going to do about closing any gaps. This is where the rubber meets the road. Changing behavior is difficult not only for ourselves, but for the people who know us. It is often not in their best interest to see you differently because it causes them to change how they see themselves.

For a deeper look, see the Three Perspectives Tour in *Leverage Your Best, Ditch the Rest*, pp. 54-57. Also see Chapter Two in its entirety.

Needs

You can count on your needs getting met consciously or unconsciously, appropriately or inappropriately. The choice is yours to make. Have you been around needy people? Who suck the energy from you? Work by the Temperament Research Institute confirms that our needs will be met in spite of the environment.

David Kiersey, *Please Understand Me*, identifies four types of people (he calls them temperaments) each of which has core needs or drives that must be met. Which are you?

- Guardians are driven by duty and responsibility as well as by social belonging
- Artisans seek freedom to act without hindrance and to make a marked difference or impact
- Idealists desire a unique identity, plus empathetic relationships. They are drawn to causes and non-conformity.
- Rationals are scientifically and intellectually curious. Mastery and control over things deemed to be sacred is important to them.

Each of us has secondary needs which may conflict with our primary needs. Further, our needs and actions under stress can take us down. To identify your needs and how they interact, consider *Leverage Your Best, Ditch the Rest*, pages 115-121 for nine exercises that will help you identify, compile, whittle down and deal with your needs effectively. Also, see Chapter Two in its entirety.

(For more on this topic, also see the Type Dynamics section of Isabelle Myers *Introduction to Type in Organizations*.)

Tolerations

Tolerations are what you are putting up with. Think of yourself as a ship and tolerances as barnacles. It's a good idea to pull into dry dock every once in awhile to examine and scraped them. The more tolerations you carry, the less easy your movement through life. Tolerations, even small ones, drain us and pull our energy away.

So why do we let tolerations build up? Unfortunately, we've learned too well how to "keep a happy face." Further, it's a pain-in-the-neck to get rid of them, plus we don't know quite where to start. Perhaps we don't feel we deserve the time or cost it will require to eliminate them.

Werner Erhart, the founder of the EST movement, suggests identifying tolerations, and then handling them in this sequence:

1. Y – just do it yourself, or
2. D – delegate to someone, or
3. P – pay someone, even if you can't afford to, or
4. NS – there is no solution; you must live with this one

Use these identifiers to help you deal with your list of tolerations. "A key is to be at choice with toleration, and find a way to be okay with it." If you complain about your commute, move. If you can't move, join a car pool. If you can't join a car pool, hire a driver. If you can't hire a driver, live with the commute. But do make active choices. Active choices are excellent ways to defuse a toleration. (Blanchard suggests that for the upcoming holidays, you consider asking someone to eliminate one of your tolerations; or as a present, you might eliminate someone else's toleration.)

Tolerations add up. Even simple ones can collectively overwhelm, so start with a few that are easily approached; maybe organize one drawer in your messy desk, or use laundry service for your shirts, or replace the battery in your non-functioning office clock. In the meantime, ditch the rest to give you space and energy to work these. You can pull the others in later.

This plan is markedly simple, yet profoundly powerful. "*Within 24-hours, you can address a couple of the tolerations you have been putting up with and do something about them.*"

Applications

1. Because it is chock-ful of exercises and life examples, Executive Forum highly recommends that you buy and use *Leverage Your Best, Ditch the Rest*, Scott Blanchard and Madeleine Homan, William Morrow / Harper Collins, NY, NY 2004. The retail cost is \$22.95.
2. In five minutes, list as many of your own tolerations as you can. From this list, choose one or two to deal with within the next 24 hours. And then do it.
3. Access www.leverageyourbest.com for a valuable free series of tools, including a 360 degree assessment, that are suitable for yourself as well as your team. The user name is "coach" and the password is "now."
4. Conduct a first impressions activity by choosing three adjectives you want others to use to describe you. Working with a partner (this exercise works best if you don't know each other) see if he/she can figure them out and write them down without you revealing them verbally. (Acting is okay!). Then have your

partner share his/her observations. On target and congruent with your intentions? Briefly discuss your findings and then go through the same exercise with your partner's adjectives.

5. Consider instituting over-the-phone consulting and coaching sessions. Supportive studies show that eliminating eye contact and erasing incrimination for cancelled appointments are supportive of increased depth of conversation as well as expedience.

Note: Synopsis quotes are from Blanchard's presentation and/or *Leverage Your Best, Ditch the Rest*.