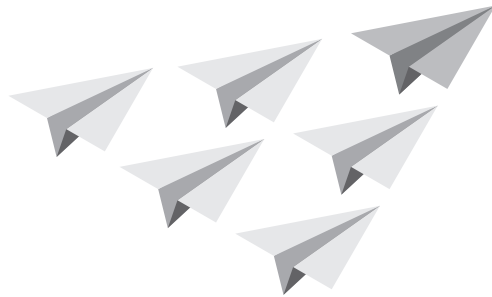


NEW
LEADERS

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*A guide to leadership
and self-discovery*

Laurent Jacquet



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FOREWORD

It's a regular Friday at work in August 2008. After yet another party last night, I drag myself to work in the not so early morning. I manage to get through the first hours, and after a quick lunch, I go back to my car in the parking lot where, exhausted, I take a nap, hiding and hoping no one sees me.

Somewhere I dream of making a difference in the world, but I have no idea where to start. I chose this as my first job – in a large, well-known organization that employs over 400,000 people – because I didn't know any better. It wasn't a carefully planned or well-thought-out decision – it just happened, almost by accident. When I wasn't sure what to study, my parents suggested economics, thinking it would give me enough job options later. I thought, why not? After all, I didn't know what else to choose. At work now, my managers gently push me onto projects that suit them the most. I'm not sure what else I would do, so I keep on nodding. I just go with the flow, not sure where all this will lead me, and unable to take control of the direction of my life. I have no idea what I really want.

Luckily, I have my sport. I've played field hockey from a very young age and have been spending most of my free time over the last two decades on the field, either practicing or competing. After starting the sport, I quickly began playing against the best in Belgium, and now I regularly have the opportunity to compete with and against the best players in the world. I am immersed in an exciting environment that pushes me to be the best player I can be. I feel an incredible energy, engagement, and pride and have been learning a lot about myself along the way.

On this Friday in 2008, the excitement and engagement I feel in my sport is in stark contrast with how I feel at work. I don't feel a

sense of meaning or purpose. I'm not sure why I'm here or where I want to go. I want to achieve something great, but I'm not sure where to start. My energy and commitment are low. I manage to navigate the maze and fly under the radar at work. I perform as expected, but certainly not above. I long for the end of the day and the end of the week, when my real life starts.

When I look around me, I see most of my colleagues thinking and behaving the same. My managers, overworked, barely have time to speak with me. They seem bitter. There are no smiles, there is no fun. There is constant change though, a lot of stress and a lot of firefighting. People come and go. I wonder: If I climb the ladder and become one of these managers, is that what awaits me? Is this the journey I aspire to?

And then it hit me: I decided that day, after having tasted passion and love for my sport for so long, that I wanted to feel the same way about my work. On that day, I started a quest to find this same engagement, but I still wasn't sure where to start or what direction to take. I had the deep realization that if anything was going to change for the better, I first had to take full responsibility for everything. I needed to move away from being the victim, blaming my boss and my circumstances. I needed to take back control and actively design how my life would unfold. I needed to stop going with the flow.

Through a lot of reading, seminars, and introspection, I made big steps: I got to know myself much better, I made some better decisions, and at last I could envision a direction in which I could use my strengths and make the impact I longed to make.

It was a painful experience to be stuck for those years, not really engaged, working for the weekend, and unable to express my best self. We all have a responsibility to influence our environment for

FOREWORD

the better, but leaders bear an even greater responsibility to care for those around them. I realized that great leadership could have been transformative for me in my career and quest for growth. My journey could have been different if I'd had a leader to put me in front of my responsibilities, one who cared for me and at the same time challenged me.

I have made it my mission today to create better leaders – new leaders – who can inspire and support all those people who are just like me in my early days – flying under the radar, waking up without a strong sense of purpose, and feeling unfulfilled at work. I hope to create new leaders who can help others step up and find their way more quickly.

Today, together with all my colleagues at TPC Leadership around the world, we believe that “better leaders make better organizations,” and we wake up every day to make that a reality.

This book is a journey of self-discovery, grounded in the understanding that having clarity on what we stand for and a vision of where we're heading are the foundation of the impact we want to make in this world. This book is also a guide for all those who desire to inspire others: it's for all those new leaders who got so good at their job that they're now responsible for a team and wonder where to start. It's also for all the experienced leaders who want to lead in a new way – in their own way.

NAVIGATING A WORLD OF COMPLEXITY



Our individual ability to navigate an increasingly complex world will be the start of our journey as leaders. This first chapter aims at shedding some light on the challenges that impact our performance and wellbeing, leading us ultimately to the obvious conclusion: we cannot be passive recipients of our environments. We need to take responsibility, and become actors and designers of our own lives in this fascinating but complex world we live in.

A World of Too Much

I wake up. My phone is on airplane mode, as always, until after breakfast. After my cup of tea, I turn it back on, and I'm hit with a tsunami of messages: urgent work emails, news alerts, promotional messages, information from my kids' school and sports clubs, spam and more... Most messages request some sort of action: 'join this', 'reply now', 'pay here'.

Now I am really awake. I take a deep breath and feel the stress and burden of this pile of things on my plate.

The amount of information coming at us from different angles is gigantic. The technological advances of the last decades have led to a stream of innovations that have revolutionized ways of working and living. Ideas that were considered science fiction not so long ago are now not only reality, but widely available. I can buy myself a cappuccino at the local coffee bar Ernesto's with my

smartphone in less than one second. And while waiting for my hot beverage, I can order a new pair of sneakers and have them delivered the next day at my door.

Housing, banking, retail, health, education... it's impossible to find a sector that has not been profoundly impacted by innovations. They have transformed our economy, creating new industries and opportunities and expanding access to those opportunities to people who had previously been excluded. Today, from your living room, you can start a blog or a vlog, get millions of followers, and impact lives.

In the coming years, artificial intelligence, blockchain, and virtual reality (to name a few) will bring new innovations that will further turn complete sectors upside down, hopefully for the good, further improving the customer experience.

We are surrounded by devices and applications meant to make our lives easier, but often they seem to do the opposite. Considering that most people use multiple platforms on multiple devices, if left unmanaged, this stream of triggers, this overload of data can leave people feeling overwhelmed, to say the least.

I often end my days feeling completely depleted by the hundreds of WhatsApp messages, emails, and other notifications I receive. Each of them is fighting for my attention. Drained of energy, I often feel exhausted... but still unable to resist the temptation of the indigestible menu this world of too much has to offer me.

One last time I scroll through my newsfeed to see if I haven't missed any breaking news. One last time I do a quick search to see which restaurant gets the best reviews for our upcoming city trip to Paris. One last time I watch a random little video on my Facebook feed. Then I go to bed. My phone is on airplane mode. And it all starts again.

CHOICES

Our world of today also affects people's ability to make choices. When we're presented with too much data, our brain freezes, reducing our critical thinking skills and leaving us feeling frustrated.

My wife and I recently moved into a new place. Before the move, we went through the adventure of renovating it. We had to make literally hundreds of decisions in a couple of weeks and for each decision there were dozens of options: color, size, price, design, material, brand, ... How can we make all these decisions? And more importantly: How can we be sure we're making the "right" decisions?

That last question pushed us to compare our options in more detail to choose the items we felt were the best price for the best quality. This led to research – browsing many websites, visiting stores, and listening to advice. At some point, our brain just said *stop*.

This concept applies to all parts of our lives. When we are confronted with too much data and too many choices, our brain struggles to cope and looks for ways out: making the easiest choice, procrastinating, or not making any decision at all (which is also a decision). In the best-case scenario, you might ask someone else to decide for you, trusting their experience and expertise.

Choice no longer liberates, but debilitates.

– Barry Schwartz

This is one of the reasons Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg famously wore the same type of clothes every day. They decided to spend zero decision-making energy on clothing in their morning routine.

Understanding our brain's limitations when it comes to decision-making should inspire us to manage our daily data flow and the number of decisions we need to make. Reducing unnecessary overload keeps our best thinking for the things and decisions that really matter.

BUSY

At our core, our brains are wired to delete everything that seems irrelevant. Despite wishing the opposite, we are meant to focus on one thing at a time. The rise of technology and the constant triggering effect of new information has had a number of side effects. Digital addiction has become an addiction on par with nicotine and alcohol, with digital platforms designed to produce dopamine rushes to get us hooked on notifications and likes. Some of us may believe that digital addiction is only for teenagers endlessly scrolling on social media. Well, think again: on average we use our phones over 3 hours per day, or over 40 days per year!

As a result, our average attention span is at an all-time low; we are unable to effectively focus on one thing at a time. Our productivity and focus decrease the more we attempt to multitask, making us feel busier than ever while achieving relatively little. In fact, 'busy' becomes the default state, as we mistake being busy for being productive and get wrapped up in doing instead of being.

Our tasks and responsibilities, both at home and at work, rarely benefit from our undivided attention, making us feel like we're falling short of expectations in all areas of life.

Busyness and technological overload interrupt family dinners, creep into bedrooms, and steal precious attention that should be directed toward our loved ones. The line between work and home becomes blurred as we see a notification and struggle to

resist checking that work-related email on a Saturday afternoon. Before we know it, the email has turned into a few hours of being distracted and mentally absent as we attempt to give space to the work problem *and* family time – and end up focusing on neither.

When a friend or colleague asks how you are, how often does your reply emphasize how busy you are, either at work, with your family, or otherwise?

Imagine if we answered the opposite: “I’m great! Extremely relaxed. Taking a lot of time to just chill.” Many of us would feel guilty, lazy, or unproductive for saying this, even if it were true. The rise of “hustle culture,” or the idea that any time we don’t spend working or “hustling” is time wasted, has made us feel guilty for resting while the world seems full of brilliant people getting things done.

In fact, being busy is seen as the expected state if you want to be successful, important, or considered for promotions and advancements. If you’re not constantly busy, there must be something wrong with you – you’re not efficient or productive enough, you don’t have enough drive and dedication, or maybe you’re even a bit lazy. This mentality is so pervasive that people who are *not* busy do everything they can to appear busy.

So, if this is the expectation of our society, how do we react when we have two hours of free time? We pack it with more to-dos, preferably to be done simultaneously (because then we really feel the superpower of ultra-efficiency): running while listening to a podcast, driving while calling, ironing while watching TV, answering emails on the toilet...

Thank God we don’t have to sit still for 10 minutes doing nothing. That would be horrible. Long live the busyness and multi-task kingdom.

Lost in Translation

As a consequence of all this, we start to disconnect from ourselves. By never standing still or taking some time for introspection, we disconnect from who we are, what we want, and what's important to us.

We lose ourselves in projects, tasks, and things to do. We're not sure what would happen if we stopped for a moment, but one thing is sure – our to-do list would get bigger. So taking the time for reflection, taking a step back, doing nothing on purpose become things we avoid.

This is how weeks and months go by without us standing still and reflecting on what we really, *really* want. This is why we haven't visited our aging grandmother, taken our spouse on a date, or called that old friend who's going through difficult times. This is why we haven't taken time alone to listen to our emotions.

Getting that (daily!) time-off is absolutely essential for our recovery in this world of too much. Technological overload and busyness not only impair our routines and performances, but more importantly, they steal the very moments we so desperately need to reclaim our best selves. These fleeting moments with loved ones are the underrated rejuvenating source we need to tap into to keep things sustainable.

Recently, I went on holiday with my wife and children to Lake Como in northern Italy, a location with fantastic nature and breathtaking views. We had planned to do my favorite activity: rent a boat, take a picnic, and have a swim. The weather was amazing. And then it happened: I glanced at my phone and saw a message on my lock screen about an urgent problem that had come up at work. I knew I shouldn't answer, but the urge was overwhelming.

I rationalized to myself that the only way to stop thinking about the problem was to respond and solve it. So, I started thinking about it, then I sent some messages, then made a quick call... and just like that, half of the boat trip I had so much looked forward to was already gone.

I was there, but I was not there. My mind was somewhere else. I was not enjoying being with my two little boys, I was not being present with my wife, and I was certainly not connecting with the beautiful nature around me. On top of it all, I felt guilty for not being present, which made it all worse. I wanted to “fix” the situation, but I made it worse.

OUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

This world of too much also affects our definitions of success and happiness, influenced – amongst other things – by the following elements:

- A culture in which the individual is more important than the group, where the focus is on ourselves and less on our communities and societies as a whole. What’s in it for me?
- Social media bombarding us with perfect pictures of our friends skiing in Dubai or snorkeling in Bali, creating a constant fear of missing out, a feeling of not being or having enough.
- Clever marketing teams creating ‘needs’ you did not know you had.
- A world of instant gratification where you can have (almost) anything you want at a speed never seen before. Everything has to happen *now*.

When we mix all these ingredients together, we get a cocktail that is extremely hard to digest.

FOUR CORE INTENTIONS OF LEADERSHIP



As we saw in the previous chapter, a leader's intentions are more important than their skills. This is not to say that skills aren't important, but rather to say that intentions come first. Intentions are the foundation on which skills are built (FIG. 4). This means that even if you still need to work on some areas of your leadership, you can already be an impactful leader as long as you bring the right intentions to the table.

When leaders have selfish intentions, people can feel it. When we interact with others, we communicate our intentions through a thousand tiny nonverbal signals – facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, gestures, eye contact, etc. These tiny signals make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to fake our intentions.

For example, my wife would tell you that I am slightly impatient (to say the least). Whenever we're out and about with friends or family and I feel it's time to leave, it's extremely hard for me to fake feeling otherwise. In that moment, if someone is still talking to me, I try to wrap up the conversation politely, but I can feel that my body and mind are already walking away. My intention is clearly to leave, and that intention is almost impossible to hide.

This is true even for highly skilled communicators. The person on the other end of the conversation may be left with a vague feeling of mistrust, suspicion, or general unsettlement, even if they can't articulate exactly why they feel that way. Most people have come

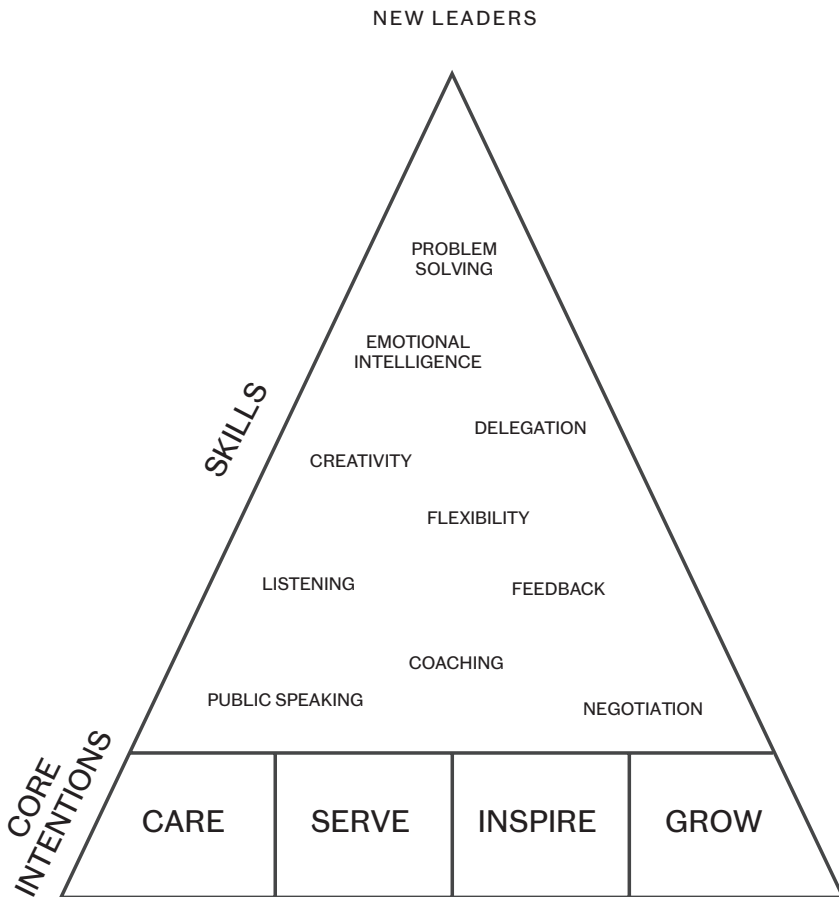


FIG.4 Core Intentions

into contact with someone like this – someone who says the right things but doesn't feel completely trustworthy.

Leaders who use the right intentions are able to positively impact others. They inspire others. People follow them out of their free will, not because they feel obliged, not because it's their job. This chapter will cover the core intentions that every leader should adopt and practice, with the understanding that true change requires consistent determination and practice. It isn't enough

to read this book once and call it done. Building and sustaining new habits and new ways of being is an ongoing process that needs regular attention.

Leadership, at least in terms of inspiring people, doesn't have to be complicated. The concepts that stick with us are often simple concepts – not easy, but simple. This is why I focus on only four core intentions: the intention to care, to serve, to inspire, and to grow. The benefit of having four simple core intentions is to be able to ask yourself every day: How can I care? How can I serve? How can I inspire? How can I grow my team? The more often you look for opportunities to practice these intentions, the more you will start to notice them. Eventually, you will start to notice these opportunities without prompting.

The four core intentions for leadership are interrelated; they make each other stronger or weaker. If you really put the intention of caring into practice and it shows in everything you do, you'll create a strong foundation of trust supporting your intention to grow the other person.

The key to implementing these core intentions effectively is *authenticity*, putting them into practice in your own way – *really* caring, not pretending to care or going through the motions of caring. If your intentions are anything less than genuine, you have missed the fundamental purpose of this book.

Finally, not only should our core intentions come from a place of authenticity, but we should also strive to apply them “one level deeper” than most people would.

If most people would bring a bottle of wine to a dinner party, you bring flowers, chocolates, and a handwritten note to show your appreciation. If most people would send a text message to wish a

and personal preferences. The ‘best’ nutrition plan is the one that makes you feel nourished and physically and mentally energized. We are all unique individuals, and our routines should reflect that.

Making the four core intentions your own should be a continuous cycle of learning and growth. First, center yourself in the intention you want to fulfill. Second, reflect on the different ways you can act on the intention. In this step, you can seek out inspiration and ideas, absorbing what resonates with you and making it your own. Third, apply your ideas using your existing skillset. Finally, evaluate and learn from the end result – were you able to make an impact? What could be done better next time? Then start over.

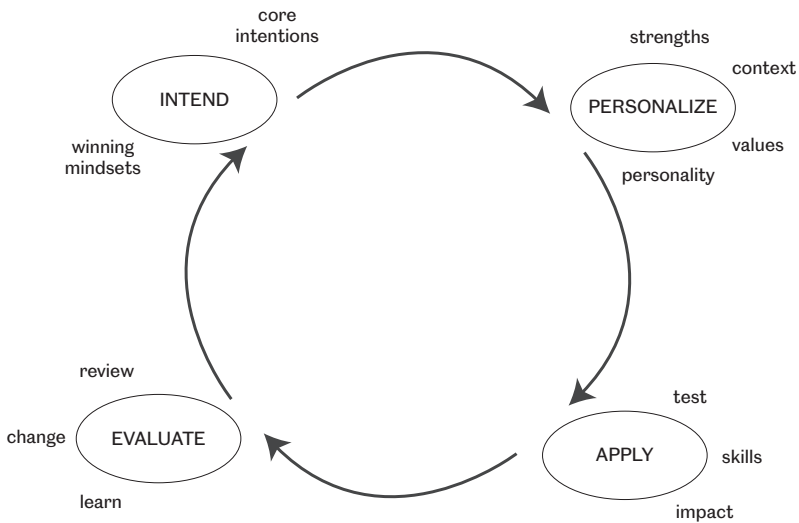


FIG.5 Lead in your own way

Simple Daily Questions

Our four core intentions and three winning mindsets are easy to remember, but when it comes to apply them in your daily life, consistent practical application is key. The gap between knowing and doing can only be bridged through persistent effort to build new habits and ways of thinking. To do this, we can ask ourselves simple but powerful questions related to the four core intentions. Some examples of these questions include:

- Who can I serve today?
- How can I care for my team this week?
- What can I do to show my colleague I really care about her wellbeing?
- What can I do this week to inspire my team?
- What can I do for myself today to feel inspired?
- How can I care for myself today?
- How can I help my friend grow?

By asking yourself questions like these on a daily or weekly basis, your brain will get accustomed to looking for solutions. Eventually, you will find opportunities to care, serve, grow, and inspire even when you're not looking for them. If you struggle with consistency, it can help to 'anchor' your new routine by attaching it to an existing part of your schedule. For example, you might sit and reflect on these questions before each regular team meeting, or you might practice this reflection as the very first thing you do when you enter the office. Anchoring new habits to existing habits and schedules can help embed this practice into your daily life.

Once you've started asking yourself the right questions, you can start applying the solutions. This will be similar to the cycle of learning mentioned in the previous section. First, ask the question and identify the solution. Second, apply the solution. Third, evaluate the impact and revise your approach if necessary. Once

you start doing this consistently, you'll start to notice the positive impact you're creating, not only for your team members and colleagues, but also for yourself.

As you apply the core intentions, keep in mind the paradox of giving (you receive the most in return when you don't expect it) and the importance of applying the core intentions authentically and without expectation of return. It can be hard to break the habit of expecting gestures of gratitude or favors in return (and feeling disappointed if they're not received), but it's an essential part of this process.

In the end, the three winning mindsets and four core intentions should become second nature to you, and applying them should become part of your daily routine. Don't rely on milestones, special events, or moments of crisis to apply what you've learned in this book. Don't wait until Christmas to show your team you care, don't wait until the final stretch of an important project to inspire your team (and yourself), and don't wait until a team member is underperforming to make an effort to help them grow. Being an exceptional leader means doing the little things on a regular basis, not only the big things on special occasions.

Enjoy the Process

Putting the core intentions into practice isn't meant to be a rigid or intimidating exercise. Instead, have fun with it! It's all about finding creative and inspirational ways to make a positive impact on those around you (and by extension, yourself). Being playful and creative in the way you apply the core intentions and winning mindsets to life's curveballs will guarantee the long-term sustainability of the process.

Sometimes you'll be able to clearly see the positive impact you're making, and sometimes you won't. Don't let yourself get discouraged. Remember, as someone with a growth mindset, you're not afraid of mistakes or failure because you know that success cannot exist without failure, and you welcome the opportunity to reflect on and learn from your mistakes. You also practice long-term thinking, so you know that as long as you're taking small steps in the right direction, you'll get to where you want to be.

The more you apply the four core intentions and three winning mindsets in your own personal way, the more powerful your impact will be. The process of applying them – and the results of the process – will be different for everyone. Embrace this! Search, test, try out, be original, and do it all in your own way. Be vulnerable, make mistakes, accept your mistakes, and apologize when necessary. **Let yourself be inspired by the impact you're making.** It's all part of the journey to becoming an impactful and compassionate leader. Lead with your intentions and start your own journey tomorrow.

THANK YOU

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