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EVERYONE DESERVES A **GREAT** MANAGER

THE **6** CRITICAL PRACTICES
FOR LEADING A TEAM

SCOTT MILLER WITH
TODD DAVIS AND VICTORIA ROOS OLSSON

Simon & Schuster

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FOREWORD

Want a guaranteed conversation starter? Ask someone if they've ever had a bad manager. And then brace yourself, because almost all of us know what it's like to work for a soul-crushing, morale-killing, please-don't-make-me-go-to-work kind of manager.

But if we're fortunate, we've also worked with a great manager—one who cared about us, believed in us, and helped us do our best work.

Legendary Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen believes management is one of the most meaningful roles in the world. In *How Will You Measure Your Life?* he writes, "If you want to help other people, be a manager. If done well, management is among the most noble of professions. You are in a position where you have eight or ten hours every day from every person who works for you. You have the opportunity to frame each person's work so that, at the end of every day, your employees will go home . . . living a life filled with motivators."

And the data proves it. According to Gallup, "Managers account for at least 70% of variance in employee engagement scores across business units."*

Being a great manager is one of the most influential roles—and one of the hardest. When I led a team for the first time, I struggled to learn on the job. What I wouldn't have given for a Wikipedia for managers, or even better, a WebMD for my leadership aches and pains. It didn't exist; so my cofounder and I set out to create one in a drafty San Francisco basement eight years ago.

The resulting company, Jhana, was founded on the idea that everyone deserves a great manager. (While there are impassioned arguments

* Gallup, Inc. (n.d.). Managers Account for 70% of Variance in Employee Engagement. Retrieved from <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/182792/managers-account-variance-employee-engagement.aspx>.

around the terms “leader” and “manager,” the authors and I will use them interchangeably in this book for ease of reading.) Jhana now serves as an online learning resource that provides bite-size training for leaders, and our research confirmed how universally hard it was to transition into leadership, how often new managers weren’t set up for success, and how little direction they received from their bosses. Our team of PhDs, researchers, writers, and technologists dove into the academic research and built a panel of managers to validate or refute their findings in the real world. What emerged was some of the best, most practical solutions for the challenges all managers face: delegating, leading people, setting the right goals, supporting people, hiring, firing, and motivating.

Apparently, I wasn’t the only new manager who could use the help, because Jhana took off. Managers used our practical solutions in tech companies, professional services, financial services, hospitals, manufacturing, schools, universities, and governments. To increase our impact, we joined up with FranklinCovey, one of the most respected leadership-development companies in the world. Beginning with its cofounder, Dr. Stephen R. Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, FranklinCovey has nearly four decades of experience around these fundamental leadership issues:

- How could we help people make one of the most difficult transitions of their careers, from individual contributor to manager, giving them the confidence to overcome their self-doubt?
- How could we help managers fulfill their potential and continue to learn and develop over time?
- How could we help them manage the often crushing stress that comes with the job?

With FranklinCovey’s principle-based leadership legacy and Jhana’s innovative Silicon Valley approach, we built a leadership solution that combined the best of both worlds: the 6 Critical Practices for Leading a Team, used by hundreds of thousands of managers in countries all over the world.

Although created primarily for managers leading teams of individual contributors, the practices in this book apply to leaders at any level:

If you're a new manager: You'll uncover the proven best practices to lead and develop your people into a high-performing team.

If you're an experienced manager: Focus on the practices that fill the gaps in your management training, and check out the tools for your most critical interactions such as conducting 1-on-1s, setting goals, and leading through change.

If you're a leader of leaders: You'll find practical ways to sharpen your managerial skills. This book can also serve as a guide to mentor new managers who report to you.

If you're a human resource, learning and development, or organizational development professional: Use this book to coach experienced managers and develop new/emerging leaders.

If you're a C-level executive: Use this book to model the practices so they manifest on the front line. If you're not using these practices, your managers probably won't either.

Along with Scott, Todd, and Victoria, I have found leadership to be especially challenging but also very rewarding. But if you're not there yet, the practices in this book will help you get there. Enjoy this journey that will inspire managers at any level to make an impact with their teams and leave a lasting legacy.

—Rob Cahill

*Cofounder and CEO, Jhana
Vice President, FranklinCovey*

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INTRODUCTION

I hate powdered sugar.

It all started when I was twenty-seven years old, and three months into my new career with the Covey Leadership Center (what would become FranklinCovey) as a frontline salesperson for K–12 schools. After an entire life in Florida, including four years with the Walt Disney Company, I was excited about my new start in Utah, with its wide-open career opportunities and delightful absence of parking-lot alligators. Imagine my surprise when the vice president asked if I would take on the additional role of managing a team of client-service coordinators.

All of the people on the team had been with the company longer than me. Surveying my new team, I rendered my judgment: they were quite capable, but in need of motivation, accountability, and a young but promising leader who could raise the bar on performance.

I buckled down and got to the job at hand. The vice president was going to be thrilled with the outcomes I was able to produce. My team would revere my inspiring style and expertise. I was going to be so effective that it would be only a matter of time before I landed another promotion, a raise, and an even larger team to lead toward greatness.

That's not quite what happened.

Trying to increase productivity and our results, I suddenly found myself monitoring arrival and departure times. I banned personal appointments during work hours. I even asked a coordinator to respond to voicemails and report any issues to me while she was out of the office—*on her honeymoon*.

She thought I was joking.

I was not.

(To her credit, she flat-out refused. We are good friends to this day, twenty-two years later.)

So yes, I was quite effective—at destroying morale, people's self-

esteem, and any shred of pride they had in their work. I was tyrannical. I was a nightmare. Fine: I was a total jackass. But I genuinely thought my brand of swagger would bring everyone in line and inspire them to new levels of engagement.

Which brings us to the powdered sugar. One morning during my reign of terror, I was reading the paper at a local diner before work while (you guessed it) eating a waffle with powdered sugar on top, when my phone rang. It was the vice president. Time for my next promotion!

Instead, he began with, “You know, I’ve been thinking . . .” and ended three minutes later with me gently—but definitely—relieved from my new leadership position and moved back into the role of a frontline salesperson.

I had been, in fact, un-promoted. After three weeks.

I set my fork down, feeling sick to my stomach, and that was the end of my first leadership role *and* my love of powdered sugar.

Fortunately, my employer, FranklinCovey, one of the world’s largest leadership-development organizations, offered me a second chance—many second chances. Through coaching and painful self-reflection, I learned to lead in a way that accomplished business results while developing my team.

After four years as a successful individual producer, I was re-extended the opportunity to lead, this time for a group of fifteen experienced salespeople in our higher-education division. By this time, I knew how to hold accountability meetings, review pipelines, forecast, understand what was a real sales opportunity and what wasn’t. I was good at managing sales . . . which is very different from managing people.

That crucial transition didn’t happen until I was promoted to general manager of our Midwestern region. It required a whole different level of skill, a more sophisticated strategy, more compassion, and tough calls. I had to interview and hire dozens of people . . . and also fire a few when their contributions fell short. I had to learn to develop high performers, motivate low performers, and have difficult conversations. I had to make decisions with six-figure consequences weekly.

It was through this role that I learned to become the manager my team deserved. To guide forty people with lofty career dreams, 401(k)s, mortgages, and families who depended on them, I had to bring a completely new level of maturity, wisdom, and judgment. I also had to earn

my leadership position—it didn't automatically come with the title. I had to behave my way to credibility.

Around this time, my mentor told me, “Scott, ten years from now, no one will remember if you met your second-quarter EBITDA or increased your margin by 4 percent. Of course, you must deliver business results to earn the right to have and keep your leadership role, but your legacy will be the lives you influence and the careers you grow.” I'd seen my mentor achieve stellar business results, but more importantly, I saw him model, coach, and instill confidence in others, changing lives for the better in the process. I began trying to do the same.

From living through this transition personally—and painfully—I became determined to help others through it. My coauthors, Todd and Victoria, share this passion and bring their own leadership challenges and experiences to this book. Ultimately, we realized that a guide with real people's experiences, combined with FranklinCovey's research, could help a lot of managers.

We've collected everything we've learned here to teach you, support you, and help you lead with confidence: insights into how and why great leaders think the way they do; nuts-and-bolts best practices for confronting and overcoming your most common leadership difficulties; tools and resources, including checklists, stories, and examples. *Everyone Deserves a Great Manager* delivers the guidance you hoped for when you were promoted but perhaps didn't receive: the support, understanding, strategies, and tactics to develop as a leader and turn your people into an engaged, high-performing team.

YOUR ROLE MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

These pages will benefit leaders at all levels, but first-level leaders (people who lead teams of individual contributors who themselves have no direct reports) will find this book especially valuable.

First-level leaders have never been more relevant. Executive adviser and bestselling author Ram Charan observes that the rapid digitization of information has eliminated massive layers of leadership in organizations. Work is collapsing down, not up. Which means that the vast majority of people are reporting to first-level leaders, who now assume unprecedented influence and responsibility.

For example, *Harvard Business Review* writes, “About 20% of the world’s websites are now on the WordPress platform—making it one of the most important internet companies. And yet, Automattic, the firm behind WordPress, only employs a couple hundred people, who all work remotely, with a highly autonomous flat management structure.”* Decades ago, the company would have had an organizational chart like a London Underground map; now a few developers on a Slack channel keep one-fifth of the web going.

In the “olden” days, first-level leaders had multiple managers above them who had steadily climbed the leadership ladder, accumulating experience along the way. Junior managers could draw on their expertise for mentorship and feedback. But today, most of those layers are gone, often leaving first-level leaders without sufficient resources or support.

In this role, you’re supposed to know the strengths and weaknesses of your team members, appear to have all the answers, and transition from focusing on your own results to achieving the team’s results. Overnight. You have to make sound decisions under ambiguous conditions, hold people accountable, and hit goals you may have had nothing to do with setting.

Despite being the new performance linchpin in your organization, you’re often the least experienced and least trained. You’re learning by trial and error because you have no other choice. Researchers in the *Harvard Business Review* found that, on average, people take on their first leadership role at age thirty—but don’t receive their first leadership training until they’re forty-two. As the researchers said, “They’re operating within the company untrained, on average, for over a decade.”† Imagine a physician, a pilot, or an engineer operating untrained for a decade—it’s unfathomable. Why would we tolerate a lower standard for the linchpins of our organizations?

* Kastle, T. (2019, March 01). “Hierarchy Is Overrated.” Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2013/11/hierarchy-is-overrated>.

† Zenger, J. (2014, August 07). “We Wait Too Long to Train Our Leaders.” Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2012/12/why-do-we-wait-so-long-to-train>.

Leadership vs. Management

You may have noticed already that we use the terms “leader” and “manager” fairly interchangeably throughout this book. We did this consciously and aren’t trying to further reinforce the divide between the two by elevating one over the other. What we do know is that some leaders need to be better managers, and some managers need to be better leaders. We’ll leave philosophical definitions to some academic tome, so don’t get hung up when we use one term or the other.

FranklinCovey has spent nearly four decades researching leadership, and we’ve found that first-level leaders are increasingly frustrated by the lack of mentoring, overburdened by impossible demands on their time, and worried about conducting difficult conversations. And if they don’t have a path forward, the odds are high that they’re going to abandon leadership—and maybe their employer too.

We know your role is difficult, but it is worth doing—and doing well—because you can truly improve the lives and careers of your team members. That’s not hyperbole. Work stress can manifest as physical, mental, and emotional challenges for everyone, including you. As a leader, you will have an impact (for better or worse) on your team’s ability to successfully overcome those challenges. We are committed to helping you become the manager both you and your team deserve.

THE 6 CRITICAL PRACTICES FOR LEADING A TEAM

To give you the confidence and competence you need to meet the inevitable challenges of managing, FranklinCovey has shrunk the bewildering world of first-level leadership down to the six most critical practices for leading a team:

Practice 1: Develop a Leader’s Mindset

Practice 2: Hold Regular 1-on-1s

Practice 3: Set Up Your Team to Get Results

Practice 4: Create a Culture of Feedback

Practice 5: Lead Your Team Through Change

Practice 6: Manage Your Time and Energy

These practices have been field-tested by thousands of actual leaders working with real teams. This content expands upon FranklinCovey's leadership solution *The 6 Critical Practices for Leading a Team*, now adopted by thousands of companies, governments, nonprofits, school systems, and universities around the world.

Here's why you'll find this book valuable:

- **You'll learn how to make the biggest career transition of your life.** These practices will help you make the mental leap to leadership, without sacrificing the qualities that made you a high-performing individual contributor (often these two are at odds!).
- **You can apply the practices immediately.** Whether you're trying to lead a team of six or sixty, you need tools you can put to work today. Each practice is packed with step-by-step instructions you can put into action right now.
- **You'll get up to speed quickly.** We've distilled decades of research, hundreds of leader interviews, and tens of thousands of assessments down to the practices that yield the greatest results for first-level leaders.

More Experienced Leaders Can Use the 6 Practices Too

While we wrote this book for first-level leaders, mid- and senior-level leaders will also find a great deal of value in it. These are skills every leader needs to draw on and frequently revisit. Even if you're managing five hundred people, you know not to get complacent about the fundamentals. For more seasoned managers, this book is part refresher, part midcourse correction, and a collection of enduring principles that you can use to coach the first-level leaders who report to you.

Read this book cover to cover and keep it on your desk when you need specific information or tools. The book's structure is made for immersive study or on-demand enlightenment.

Your coaches over the following pages will be Todd Davis, Victoria Roos Olsson, and me, Scott Miller. As FranklinCovey's chief people officer, Todd brings expertise in talent development, building winning cultures, and unleashing the potential of your most precious asset: how your people collaborate. Todd will serve as your mentor on developing effective work relationships, as he has for hundreds of others throughout his career and in his recent bestseller *Get Better: 15 Proven Practices to Build Effective Relationships at Work*.

Do I want to be a great leader . . . or do I want my team to be led by a great leader?

One question is about me, and one is about them.

If I want to be a great leader, I might unknowingly see leadership through my lens—what builds my brand, my credibility, my career. If I shift my focus to wanting my team to have a great leader, I don't care about getting the credit. I want my team to reach its full potential, whether anybody knows I did that or not.

When my father passed away, we discovered that, over his lifetime, he'd anonymously helped dozens of people. He served with the goal of lifting others, not seeking credit for himself. The best leaders do the same.

All of us want to be recognized, at least a little. But focusing on others can be the most rewarding part of our career.

—TODD

Victoria, a Swedish senior leadership consultant for FranklinCovey, brings an international perspective and a true practitioner's approach. You'll benefit from her two decades of experience developing leaders—and leading many teams herself—in large organizations around the world, from Beijing to Dubai to Brussels. As a certified yoga instructor, Victoria will also help you bring the “whole person” into your leadership approach.

I will always remember when my friend Sofia called me on a Sunday evening with exciting news: she'd been promoted into her very first leadership role. Elated and a little nervous, she asked me to share everything I knew about being a great leader . . . in a half hour.

She was starting her new assignment the following day because it had been a quick, internal promotion. I shared as much as I could that Sunday evening, but any new leader needs more than a few minutes to make the biggest leap of their career.

This situation is all too common. There are a lot of Sofias out there—first-level leaders both excited and overwhelmed by their new responsibilities, thrown into their new role with just a “congratulations.” This book is for all of you.

—VICTORIA

And I bring two decades of leadership mistakes, lessons learned, and successes, from my first un-promotion to finding my footing as a sales leader, general manager, executive vice president, and chief marketing officer. Like my two coauthors, I've intentionally chosen to be both candid and vulnerable so you can benefit from our collective leadership experiences. Hopefully, our transparency will give you a path around these common pitfalls. We pair these personal insights with learnings beyond FranklinCovey, including other respected leadership experts.

For clarity, I'll serve as your primary narrator, with the exception of Practice 6, where Victoria will bring her deep expertise. Please note that to honor confidences, we have changed some names and minor details in our stories.

Employees often report that their relationship with their direct leader is the most meaningful relationship in their professional lives, and determines whether they stay with a company or move on. If you become a great leader using the insights and skills in this book, you'll find greater job satisfaction, opportunities for advancement, and the chance to affect the lives of others for the better. You'll become the manager you and your team deserve.

Access More Tools Online

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THE CHALLENGE FOR FIRST-LEVEL LEADERS

PARTICIPATE IN *THE 6 CRITICAL PRACTICES FOR LEADING A TEAM™* WORK SESSION



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Yet many people are promoted because of their technical capabilities. Both new and experienced first-level leaders can struggle when it comes to excelling at leading teams in today's workplace.

This work session helps first-level leaders:

- Fast-track their development as emerging leaders.
- Learn the basic skills and tools every manager needs, but few receive.

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