



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

— SERIES —

THE SUMMARY OF BALANCING ACT

By Dr. Andrew Temte
Amplify 2021

Introduction

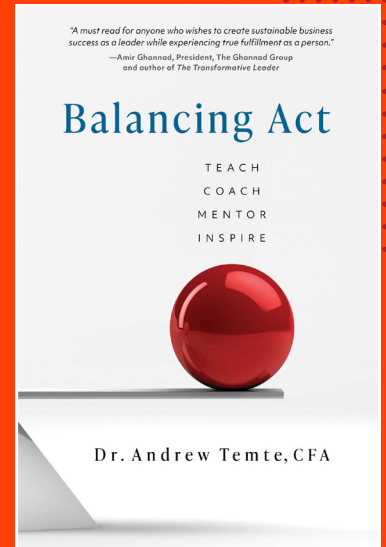
Success without balance is often more disastrous than failure with balance.

When the unbalanced achieve victory, it often serves to further destructive habits. When the balanced suffer defeat, resilient and perseverance grows.

Being off balance almost assuredly results in hurting the people you care for most, because it renders you unable to open yourself up to other points of view. You become prone to making assumptions and taking people for granted. Being off-balance means, almost by definition, that you have a fixed mindset around certain aspects of your life. It causes you to become unyielding in certain circumstances, projecting your own lack of balance onto those around you, whether it's your direct reports, your family, or your community.

Up until my early forties, I was very one-dimensional: first wholly focused on school, then wholly focused on becoming a rock star, then wholly focused on completing my education and starting a family, and eventually wholly focused on work. If you're all about

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just one thing, you're likely setting yourself up for disaster, especially if that thing is work. Being an effective business leader requires an understanding of the balancing acts leaders play. I am thankful that my eyes were opened to this fact after decades of having it all and still feeling like I had nothing. Throughout this book, I look forward to helping you explore the balancing acts you and your teams play.

Part 1: Leadership for the Next Generation

We're in the midst of a tectonic shift in what it means to be an effective leader. For most of my career, leaders were chosen because they demonstrated strong technical skills, were able to play and win at the game of workplace politics, or demonstrated supreme loyalty to the leaders and decision makers who came before them. That generation of leaders was encouraged to rule with unflinching confidence, often from behind a closed door. They sought to demonstrate strength above all else and did so at the expense of the well-being of their subordinates. But these unapproachable, uncaring, and unbalanced leaders created an epidemic of disillusionment within the lower ranks of their organizations, one that we still haven't fully healed from today.

You Are Responsible for Your Own Wake. One of the most important lessons you learn as a boater is that you are responsible for your own wake. The bigger the boat, the greater the level of responsibility that the captain bears. Similarly, leaders at all levels leave a wake as they interact with the organization—the higher up you are in the company, the bigger the wake you throw off. It's your responsibility to be aware of your wake and the impact it could have on individuals and teams, both within your immediate surroundings as well as further downstream.

Teach, Coach, Mentor, and Inspire (TCMI). Whether you like it or not, your voice is loud and leaves a powerful wake. As you speak, those around you will pick your words apart for context and subtext. Some of your key roles are to teach, coach, mentor, and inspire. Others are to assess talent and provide constructive feedback to your team members so that they can surpass you. As an influencer, you walk a fine line. You need to find a balance that allows you to judge without being judgmental—to criticize constructively. And sometimes you will have to take control of a situation. But nothing says "I care" more than helping another human being develop and grow.

The Light in Your Eyes. When I'm interviewing job candidates, one of the primary things I'm looking for is that intangible "X factor": a certain light in the candidate's eyes that shows their motivation and ability to learn and grow. While poor leadership can quickly extinguish the light in a high potential hire's eyes, providing a supportive working environment can help nurture the light and keep it shining bright as time goes on. When you find an organization that offers that kind of supportive, nurturing, and balanced environment, leaving it becomes very difficult.

Opportunity, Joy, and Purpose at Work. Unfortunately, I see many people in our society who expect that opportunity will be magically bestowed upon them. They've grown up in coddled, "everyone gets a prize" schools and homes. They believe the business world owes them something just for showing up. Here's my message for the younger generations who are in college or starting their careers: Opportunity comes to those who are continuously learning, moving forward, and applying their talents in a constructive fashion. If one sits back and waits for an opportunity to knock, the wait will be long and frustrating. The ego must be balanced, because over the long term, opportunity aligns itself with authenticity.

A Night at the Theater. Each disengaged employee costs the employer roughly 34 percent of the employee's annual salary, according to Gallup. More significantly, Gallup found that managers account for at least 70 percent of the variance in team engagement—people don't leave their company, they leave their manager. And as leaders, our egos routinely get in the way of our identifying the actively disengaged. In addition to our built-in wiring to look for the positive in human interaction, it's very difficult for us to admit failure and genuinely take on board the feedback of others.

What Can We Do? So how can we improve organizational performance? By identifying the actively disengaged and helping them discover other opportunities elsewhere (one door closes, other opens). Managers can start by looking carefully for the light in their employee's eyes. Nurture their light by challenging them and providing the right development opportunities at the right time. Remember, at the top of the list of your standard work is to teach, coach, mentor, and inspire. Whether you recognize it or not, your disengaged team members are crying out for your help. It's likely they took the job you offered and haven't really connected with the business, culture, or customers. Sometimes, as a leader, you need to show people kindness and help them see what's possible by forcing a change to the status quo.

Disorder, Chaos, and Growth. Businesses are powered by humans. While not always the case, a key goal for most businesses is growth with profitability. As the business grows, teams expand, and the level of intimacy among team members begins to erode. Walls are erected between teams to protect a sense of team identity. The concept of "us versus them" takes hold, and competition is established *within* the business. Mistrust becomes pervasive as teams compete for resources and team goals begin to diverge from overarching corporate goals. I believe that if we all learn that regression to disorder is a nat-

ural process in most companies and begin to fight entropy earlier in the life cycle of the company as it grows, we will see more high functioning teams, fewer artificial silos, improved trust, and ultimately, better business performance.

Part 2: Education and Lifelong Learning

Throughout history, education has played the role of the "great leveler." Social structures and societies have been transformed through education. We have clear examples that when education and creativity are stifled or reserved for the elite, our progress as a species is limited. When educational access is limited, entire swaths of the population are left behind or are suppressed by those who are allowed in the club; our perspectives become more localized and narrow. We fight among ourselves for the betterment of a particular town, village, region, or country but almost always to the detriment of the planet as a whole.

Think Globally Act Locally. For the foreseeable future, Spaceship Earth is our only viable home. In both our personal and professional capacities, we need to treat her and her inhabitants with respect and dignity, with a greater awareness of the behavior aspect of business and the importance of softer, human skills. Another approach is simply kicking the can down the road to future generations and exacerbating our current real and acute challenges.

The Reskilling Revolution Versus the Clay Layer. To utilize the new technologies that are becoming necessary in most roles and industries—and to survive and thrive in an economy that will be defined by technological disruption—we will have to reform our approach to education. Meeting the challenge of the Reskilling Revolution will depend upon having a mentally agile workforce that is able to change as the demand-side characteristics for labor rapidly evolve.

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Lifelong learning—that is, the continuous development of individual skills and capabilities—will soon be a baseline condition for labor-market participation.

The Value of a Personal Continuous Improvement Journey. The beauty of a continuous improvement journey is that it can be truly eye opening—at least, it was for me. Adopting a continuous improvement leadership stance helped me understand how I can be a little bit better tomorrow than I was today, and how I can ensure that my mistakes and failures are viewed as opportunities to learn and grown—not barriers to future success. I’m more open to new information, perspectives, and ideas; to being creative; and to exploring with curiosity and discovering new ways of disrupting old habits that may have persisted for years, if not decades.

Four Core Competencies of a Future-Ready Workforce. Specifically, there are four key competencies that I believe everyone needs in order to work effectively across departments, understand how their individual contributions fit into the bigger picture, and ultimately thrive in a future of increasingly advanced technology: financial acumen, data literacy, commercial acumen, and human skills. This is not to suggest that every employee should be an expert in these areas, but understanding the bigger picture—how the activities of the organization fit together within the broader marketplace—can help individuals become better contributors, break down silos between departments, and rally employees around objectives that are bigger than their individual roles.

The Results of a Continuous Improvement Journey. My company has been on a continuous improvement journey for the last seven years. A key tenet of continuous improvement is measurement. If you were to walk around our office, you would see videos screens in nearly all departments that display that team’s gemba board (showing progress against goals, risks, challenges, wins, and trends in key performance indicators—KIPs). This shows the actual

state of the department’s work and makes plain both what’s going well and what’s not, instead of hiding those numbers away or reserving them for the company elite.

Solving the Leadership Shortage. Leaders can be both managers of teams and individual contributors because the ability to influence is a key to success, and influence is an essential leadership quality. At an early age, students should be able to make the connection between the technical skills they’re acquiring and the behavioral skills they will need for their work to be truly impactful—so that we’ll have fewer unskilled “accidental managers” and more students who grow up to embrace the benefits of understanding how to influence and lead. Teachers and mentors (parents specifically) are critical in changing attitudes toward personal growth through education. The leadership shortage will become much less acute if we all do our part to promote the benefits of lifelong learning, balance education between technical and human skills, and begin leaning into the upcoming Reskilling Revolution.

Part 3: Effective Communication

In business, you can set the most beautiful strategy, but if you don’t have the right players to execute it, you’re going nowhere. Even more important, as strategy changes, the players need to change too. One of my biggest failings as a leader over the years has been to assume that the players who were hired to execute our strategy were still the right player for that strategy five years later. This is why talent acquisition and talent development are so important to a business. It’s our responsibility as leaders to identify potential skill gaps in our team members and provide development opportunities to help them succeed as priorities shift. However, this responsibility is not one-way. Team members also have the responsibility of continuously learning and engaging in con-

structive conversations with their leaders about the skills and competencies needed by the organization in the future.

Listen Up. Businesses are made up of people, and, in order to succeed, those people need to be able to *hear* one another, have difficult but necessary conversations, *listen* to logic and reason, and have the strength to set their egos aside. Miscommunication in our personal lives can destroy relationships, just as miscommunication in the workplace can destroy careers, business opportunities, partnerships, client relationships, sales prospects, and economic value. If we are able to bridge the gap in communication skills by even a few degrees, the value creation to society would be immense.

The Difference Between Music and Noise. Active *listening*—rather than passive *hearing* is key to gaining understanding in a conversation. Far too often I find myself thinking about how to phrase my rebuttal instead of understanding meaning and context and interpreting the body language of the person I'm talking to. When you truly listen, you might find music where there was once the perception of noise. And if your message is being received as noise, saying it slower or louder won't help—you must learn how to communicate your message through multiple channels and in different ways.

Why Email is the Worst. My hypothesis is that we're at an inflection point where email and other one-way communication tools may be destroying more value than they add. Certainly, email can help build value by reinforcing effective communication (confirming information or making an announcement) but my recommendation is that we treat email with respect and think consciously about the circumstances under which one-way communication is beneficial (right tool, right job) and when it is likely to be disruptive.

Responsiveness: The Neglected Leadership Trait.

Striking the right balance in responding to a colleague who is in need of advice, input to a work stream, or a decision for a project, is of critical importance to team cohesion and how others view you as a leader. As I continue my personal continuous improvement journey, it's dawned on me that this behavior can significantly erode interpersonal and team trust. It breeds uncertainty, puts people on edge, and can throw your team off balance.

Body Language and Tone: The Other 93 Percent.

Instead of focusing on what we are saying and in what order, it may be more important for us to focus on *how*. Let's agree that a large proportion of communication is nonverbal and that, in particular, we get into trouble when our spoken words don't match what our tone and bodies are saying. As our communication tools evolve from text-based to video, the other 93 percent will become of even greater importance. In particular, our body language will play a greater role in our ability to communicate effectively.

Johnny Got Bullied Today. The value of strong communication skills can be easily lost when they're not accompanied by emotional intelligence. Our society has become too fractured and polarized. We fight too much in ways that aren't productive or constructive. We've lost the ability to combine emotional intelligence with strong communication skills in order to demonstrate the empathy, understanding, and situational awareness that can make all the difference in our society.

Part 4: The Whole Self

When I'm interviewing a prospective team member, the question I always ask is: what do you do for fun outside the office? The candidate's answer can be a

key tipping point for me. A lack of outside interests can signal that either (a) the candidate is not highly motivated or (b) the candidate becomes immersed in work at the expense of family and friends. If (a), then the candidate doesn't belong in our culture. If (b), a breakdown is likely to occur at some point in the future—which will be expensive for both the individual and the company. Most importantly, knowing that the candidate engages in a mentally or physically challenging hobby signals to me that they have the mental agility to take on new tasks and are able to change and grow based on the ever-shifting priorities of the business.

Hold On. When my garage band and I perform “Hold On” (written by Kerry Livgren of KANSAS), I'm reminded of the personal and professional struggles we go through as we wind our way through this wonderful gift of life we have been given. Our responsibility to that gift is to live life to the fullest and make a difference along the way. However, during the journey, we invariably lose our way. Perspectives get warped, judgment becomes clouded, and we find ourselves out of balance.

The Rise of Individuality in the Workplace. One of the most deep-seated human instincts is to band together and cooperate to ensure survival. This instinct carries through to the modern corporation. We follow persuasive leaders and form teams to create new products, but these same leaders and teams and specialized roles can lead to soul-crushing conformity and repetition. One of the most difficult tasks of a manager will be to embrace the personalities of individual team members and to provide the space necessary for free expression and creativity. The reason this is so difficult is the strong countervailing pressures of on-time delivery and goal achievement.

Words I Live By. It took me a long time to come to the realization that there can be minimal separation between the person I am at work and the person I

am elsewhere. So when I discuss my philosophy for balanced work, I'm really discussing a philosophy for a balanced life, of which work is one aspect. Today, I've got six words that I use as a guide to my interactions with other humans and to how I approach solving the problems I face. When I get into a difficult situation, whether at work or at home, I pull out my list:

Calm. Consistent. Persistent. Thoughtful. Agile. Industrious. Then I pick one or two that apply to whatever I'm doing with, take a few centering breaths, and think about how I can turn those words into action to move forward.

Finding the Courage to be Vulnerable. I believe courage is essential; you have to be clear when communicating results both vertically and horizontally in business. Sugarcoating doesn't help anyone in the long run. I'm talking about the courage to stand up for what's right, engage in a challenging conversation, and strike the right balance between vulnerability and ego. Too much vulnerability and you're labeled a pushover; folks will take advantage of you. Too much ego and you're labeled as unapproachable and aloof; team members won't want to work with you.

Grace, Dignity, and Compassion. I've shared the six words that I live by, but since late 2008, I've relied on three more to help shape my interactions with strangers, friends, colleagues, clients, and family members. Those three words have served me well and are proving to be particularly important during the current state of social unrest and economic upheaval: *Grace. Dignity. Compassion.*

The Whole Self Superpower. If you're keeping track, I use a total of nine words to help me achieve balance at work and play. I must continually remind myself that words are just words unless they're also accompanied by deeds. While each word has power of its own, the real strength lies in combining them. The words you choose should hold real value and

meaning in your lived experiences. It is important to stress that balance is a journey, not a destination. Don't let unbalanced moments discourage you from continually pursuing a more balanced existence. Learning requires that you become purposely uncomfortable and work toward integrating newfound knowledge into your whole self.

Part 5: Alignment

Most business leaders (myself included) espouse the value of teamwork and collaboration across departments, product lines, and divisions. Most business leaders (myself included) are also frequently disappointed by the lack of success in most collaboration efforts. In my experience, the most common reasons for collaboration failure are the lack of standardization in process, procedure, and data, as well as a misalignment of goals and incentives across teams. Even when two teams get together with the best of intentions, failure occurs due to the lack of standardized tools and information. Faulty collaboration is not because one team is not “cooperating,” but often occurs when the receiving team’s goals don’t fit with those of the requesting team.

Trust is the Bedrock of Business Performance. If you’re mentoring young professionals, hand them a copy of Patrick Lencioni’s *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, and stress the importance of establishing trust in the business community. Use your own experiences as a guide, and tell them stories of how damaging mistrust can be for a team and a business. You can make a difference in the trajectory of future leaders by helping to open their minds to the importance of organizational trust and the benefits of a proper technical/behavior skill balance.

When Everyone’s in Charge, No One’s in Charge. As traditional “command and control” management systems are replaced with flattened, matrixes, col-

laborative systems, decision making and driving successful outcomes become more challenging. This is exacerbated by the expectation that all team members should be heard and their opinions considered before reaching compromise and consensus to move forward. I’ve seen more than my fair share of projects stall or fail because decisions were delayed or never materialized. Being a collaborative leader is not by itself sufficient. I posit that a necessary condition for effective teamwork and collaboration is to strike a balance between leadership and followership.

Nearly Stranded at LaGuardia. To minimize confirmation bias—our tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one’s existing beliefs—I recommend that you start with you. Ask yourself how your beliefs and past experiences may create unintended bias in how you view the world or approach problem solving. Only after you’ve explored your own belief system and how it creates challenges in interpreting data can you start thinking about how the beliefs of others color their lenses. As a leader, all I can do is explore my potential sources of bias and recognize that those around me wear their own unique lenses through which they view the world.

Lost in a Sea of Ragweed. Many humans I know like to check boxes. They like order and routine. They like seeing things through and proceeding one step at a time. They like seeing results and making progress. It runs against many of our personality types to step back and ask whether the work we’re doing is still adding the value it was intended to. It’s hard to admit failure or stop a project midstream. We understand the concept of sunk costs; however, it’s much more challenging to label work as a sunk cost, stop that work, move on to more productive endeavors, and be okay with it.

The True North of Indispensability. You go to the

same convenience store over and over because of the consistency and reliability of its people and products. You *become* a fan of brands because of great advertising, word-of-mouth recommendations, or a positive initial experience. You *remain* a fan of brands when the proof points pile up. Switching becomes harder as the emotional bond strengthens. A brand hits the jackpot when a sense of *indispensability* is created in the eyes of the consumer. I am convinced that one of the best weapons against transactional commoditization is to align around creating indispensable experiences for your business consumers. In my opinion, there are three key elements of indispensability: people, product, and reliability. In continuous improvement parlance, a company's "true north" is the vision or purpose of the organization. And at my company, indispensability is the key to our true north.

Part 6: Leader Standard Work

I am who I am today because of Carl Schweser at the University of Iowa and a handful of other extraordinary human beings who saw something in me that I couldn't see in myself at a particular stage of my life. They all played their parts in their own ways and at different times, helping me develop an understanding of effective, ethical, and balanced leadership. I am eternally grateful to all of them.

The Value of a Professional Continuous Improvement Journey. The tools of continuous improvement, when applied to a business environment, can be extremely effective in keeping teams focused on identifying and rooting out waste, respecting team members, and keeping the customer at the fore. When continuous improvement tools are applied on a personal level, mistakes are recognized and corrected more rapidly. Over time, your eyes become accustomed to seeing fault points and recognizing the impact of your actions on others. This involves

asking two simple questions: "How will I be a better person today than I was yesterday?" And "Am I making progress toward my goals?"

Ethical Leadership. Viewed through the lens of ethical leadership, the task of generating profits should be balanced with the needs of customers and employees, or the business will ultimately fail. The inclusive, frank, and fearless environment that we're striving to build therefore needs to be balanced against the profit motive, accountability, and responsiveness. To me, ethical leadership is all about finding new ways of working, new ways of understanding and satisfying customer needs, and new ways of being a servant to the people who work with you. That is why establishing a set of standards for leaders is an important step in building healthy, balanced and resilient businesses.

Defining Your Leader Standard Work. Adopting standard work doesn't mean you can't change your mind or respond to fluid market dynamics. At my company, our leader standard work was a blend of high-level guiding principles and specific tasks:

1. Teach, Coach, Mentor, and Inspire (TCMI)
2. Set and execute strategy (level appropriate)
3. Create and communicate clarity
4. Establish and monitor relevant key performance indicators
5. Fight entropy
6. Remove obstacles and help teams focus.
7. Act as brand ambassadors

TCMI. I feel very strongly that all leaders should have a version of TCMI (Teach, Coach, Mentor, and Inspire) in their list. Three of these elements are tools and one is an outcome—*Inspire*—which is the most

difficult element of the equation. There is a big difference between being inspired and inspiring someone else. Although inspiration can come in an instant—like a lightbulb—inspiring another human being in a management setting typically results from an accumulation of interactions and experiences.

The Half Halt and Your Emotional Quotient. In dressage, which is an equestrian Olympic sport (“horse ballet”), there is the concept of a half halt, where the rider and horse “take a breath” to rebalance and properly transition from one moment to the next. It’s important to note that the routine doesn’t stop—it’s a tool to help rider and horse collect and reflect while still moving forward. Part of your leader standard work should include creating your own version of the half halt, to self-correct your mood and demeanor quickly while the horse is moving

The Distracted Workforce. Distraction has been a problem in the meeting room for as long as there have been meetings. Modern distraction is, in my opinion, much worse. In the past, daydreaming was the primary method of escape; now modern devices can transport you into another conversation entirely. If I pick up my phone in the middle of a meeting to respond to an instant message, I might as well have gotten up out of my chair and left the room. A good first step is to think about how rude I’m being to family, friends, and colleagues when I check out. I should be present instead.

A Thought Experiment for a Healthy Team. Keep a three-hour slot open on the agenda at your next team off-site for a “team thought experiment.” Ask, “If I win the lottery and leave the company tomorrow, what would you tell the new CEO you would have done differently during my tenure? Please focus on strategic business problems and not personality conflicts.” After everyone has a chance to present their ideas, come together to rank the best recommendations and “start solutioning.”

Part 7: Leading Through Times of Crisis

The last existential threat to most business was born from economic greed and hubris prior to the Great Recession. If you were a leader in 2008, you were busy picking up the pieces from the devastation wrought by the impact that overextended, irresponsible, and in some cases, criminal financial positions had on our economy. The leaders left standing showed incredible resilience and courage in the face of adversity. They metaphorically ran toward the fire, not away.

The post-COVID-19 new world order is still highly uncertain, but companies that have established organizational trust and operate within a management operating structure of continuous improvement and organizational health will likely fare better than their counterparts who operate in an environment of ill-defined processes and organizational suspicion.

Running Toward the Fire. Leading others is both a responsibility and a privilege. We accomplish what we do through others—our role is to direct, to support, and to care. That last point is crucial. We don’t have to be friends with everyone we lead or even get along with them, but we must care about them. The most important thing a leader should model is the purpose of the organization. Leaders must live the cause. They must be in the center of the fight. I’m incredibly fortunate to know clearly the purpose of our organization and I work to model it each day.

COVID-19 and the Social Norm of Powering Through. We have an obligation as citizens to change how we think about the norm of powering through illness. If I infect even one person, I infect that person’s family. I potentially infect their friends and colleagues, some of whom might be more susceptible to the potential damage an illness can cause. My choice to show up when I’m contagious negatively impacts the productivity of many other

people and inappropriately puts them at risk. And I'm also convinced that our performance isn't what we think it is when we power through.

Organizational Trust and Returning to the Office after COVID-19. Healthy organizations have been shown to perform better than unhealthy organizations and exhibit higher levels of employee engagement and retention. Trust is a central component of any organizational health model. Trust within a team and between colleagues is built over time and is a two-way street among peers, managers, and subordinates. Trust grows with high quality handoffs that are repeatable and reliable. With the right accountability, communication, and process flow frameworks in place, trust should be the baseline assumption. Clearly defined responsibility matrices (RACI) are also an essential ingredient in building organizational trust.

Conclusion: Learning from Our Past

I'm a firm believer that if we don't learn from our past, we are destined to repeat it. As a continuous improvement leader, I believe mistakes and errors are only failures if we refuse to use them as learning opportunities.

Time invested in bringing your memories out from their analog vaults is time well spent. The exercise of constructively reviewing your past can unlock opportunities for learning and growth that may have been long forgotten. Digging into our past experiences with an eye toward learning and improving can help us identify opportunities to better ourselves and, by extension, to make better career choices, improve our social interactions, and strengthen relationships with our immediate family. Hence, the

starting point of any personal continuous improvement journey is understanding the self.

The Final Act. It takes a great deal of self-awareness, humility, emotional intelligence, curiosity, and balance to learn from failure. Those with a closed, unbalanced mind will blame others for their failures. If things work out, they want the credit; if things fall apart, it was the fault of some other person or team. The only way to learn, evolve, and grow is to face our failures head-on and learn from mistakes.

For now, I'll leave you with this: We all live in a state of imbalance—myself included. I've purposely written the stories in this book to remind *myself* to always strive for balance. Our subconscious minds work continually to help us correct and adjust how we move forward in our daily lives, but we rarely *make* the time to consciously contemplate how we can return to center.

Becoming more aware of the balancing acts we constantly play will help us to be better colleagues, leaders, friends, and family members. Polarization, fixed mindsets, and operational silos are destructive to corporate value and damage relationships of all kinds. My aim is to elevate the concepts of self-awareness, mental agility, active listening, two-way communication, and bringing one's "whole self" to work to drive improved alignment and outcomes for both the organization and its people.

I'm glad you joined me on my personal journey to teach, coach, mentor, and inspire current and future leaders as well as work to find balance between strength and vulnerability, confidence and selflessness, passion and measure, single-mindedness and inclusivity, determination and curiosity, and leadership and followership.