Convene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SERIES

THE SUMMARY OF

GOOD AUTHORITY

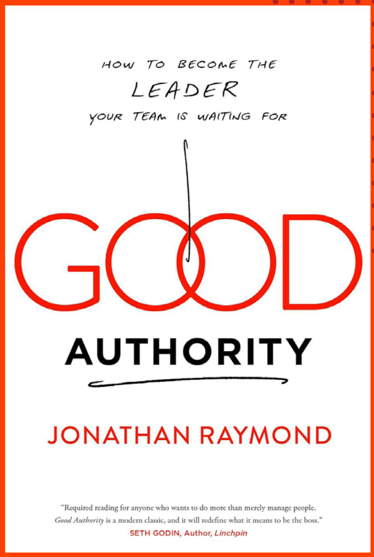
By Jonathan P. Raymond
Ideapress Publishing 2016

Introduction

When I was eleven, I tagged along with my mother, a psychology professor, as she taught a college class. That day, she asked her students, “Why is it that, even when they’re lost, men won’t ask for directions?” After the class gave a variety of answers, I raised my hand and said, “The reason men don’t ask for directions is so that way, when they figure it out, they get to be the hero.”

Looking back on this answer, I see three things: first, a belief about authority that would define my life’s work; second, that this struggle isn’t specific to one gender; and third, I was really talking about myself.

We often think our value as leaders comes from solving problems, but the highest form of leadership is to develop the strength to not give people the answers. Instead, we must create a space for them to find solutions and become a resource along the way. That’s *“Good Authority.”* It’s about being a mentor, not a hero.



ABOUT THE

AUTHOR

Jonathan P. Raymond is a leadership coach, author, and former CEO who helps business leaders become better humans—and better bosses. After two decades toggling between business development and personal growth, he gave up trying to pick a side and founded Refound, where he now works with executives, managers, and teams to build the kind of professional relationships that actually work.

Published by Study Leadership, Inc. 1N010 Prairie Path Lane, Winfield, IL 60190.

Here are its three core principles:

1. The deepest purpose of a business is to change the lives of the people who work there.
2. The role of leaders and managers is to show people how professional and personal growth are inseparable.
3. The way to get people to be engaged is to be more engaged with them.

This isn't about getting rich quick or substituting perks for real human connection. It's about asking, "How can I get better at engaging with them?" In this book, you'll discover methods and tools to help each person grow at work—and in life. Ultimately, it's about relationships, bringing our best selves to work, and changing the world—starting with the people just down the hall.

PART I

Chapter 1: Why Should I Care?

I like cleaning the kitchen. I don't love it, but there's satisfaction in the analog side of life. My daughter, at eleven, hasn't yet discovered that joy. We tried everything—reminders, bribes, and threats—but it never stuck. Then one evening, I found her quietly cleaning, humming her favorite song as she did it. She owned it. She did it because *she liked the way it made her feel.*

Isn't that what every leader wants—people who own their work? We spend billions on leadership programs, new management theories, team-building workshops, and fancy perks. We may see a bump in compliance, but never that deep sense of *"They've got this. I can relax."*

Why not? Because every approach starts with the business's needs first, and people's needs second. We inherited that view from the Industrial Revolution: "Work is for the boss." But the world has changed. Employees have more options now, and they're saying, "I want something more. I'll keep looking until I find it."

The company culture movement tries to fix this, offering new perks or spiritual frameworks. Yet engagement numbers remain grim. Carrots and sticks, even the most compassionate kind, will be spotted from a mile away. People want to know "Why?" and they won't work to serve your goals; they'll only work to serve their own.

What does that mean for modern leaders? You must promise them something they can't get alone: genuine personal growth. Use your authority to help them discover theirs. Learn to speak the language of self-authority and help your team become fluent. That's the path to real engagement—and real change.

Chapter 2: Borrowed Authority

We have good reason to mistrust authority. We've been betrayed. We've been misled and taken advantage of. The problem isn't in authority itself—it's that we haven't learned how to inhabit it in a way that's truly ours. The opposite of Good Authority isn't Bad Authority—it's Borrowed Authority.

Mike, the owner of a small tech company, was kind and capable but felt stuck. He couldn't get people to own their work. On a call, I asked him, "Mike, what's your greatest fear when it comes to authority?" He thought of his father, who constantly railed against his bosses. "Everything I do is to not be that kind of authority." Unwittingly, Mike adopted the "friend" role—the cure had side effects. Your team can't treat you as a friend and the boss at the same time.

Realizing this, Mike decided to be firm but not cruel. He started embodying accountability instead of talking about it. He stopped swooping in, started to let people think for themselves, and required personal responsibility. It wasn't easy—change never is—but the team began to feel inspired, sensing the business had direction again.

As Mike discovered, clearing your own baggage around authority lets you notice and address it in others. We all carry authority stories from childhood. Becoming a Good Authority means finding and honoring those stories—then letting them go. In that new space, you can show up with genuine clarity, heart, and conscience, creating a workplace where accountability and growth truly flourish.

Chapter 3: The Employee Engagement Fallacy

The road to a disengaged team is paved with good intentions. Nobody wants their employees to be miserable, yet many leaders hold two unconscious ideas—(1) why people don't do what we ask, and (2) what tools we have to change them. I call this the *Employee Engagement Fallacy.*

Forbes's Kevin Kruse defines employee engagement as "the emotional commitment an employee has to the organization and its goals." Gallup reports seven out of ten workers are disengaged or undermining their workplaces. We've tried endless tactics but rarely track manager engagement, assuming the lack of engagement is the employee's fault.

This outdated belief shows up as "The Five Employee Engagement Myths":

1. "I can't find good people."
2. "Nobody cares as much as I do."
3. "I can't afford to invest time in someone who's just going to leave."
4. "I'm not a therapist."
5. "We just need better systems and more communication."

Systems are great for systems problems, but **you can't solve people problems with systems alone.** In order for your employees to engage, they need to have somebody who is engaging with them. We must flip each myth:

- "I can't find good people" becomes "I won't know who's good until I challenge them."
- "Nobody cares as much as I do" becomes "They care differently, and I need to tap into that."
- "I can't afford to invest time" becomes "I can't afford not to."
- "I'm not a therapist" becomes "I can still mentor personal growth."
- "We just need more communication" becomes "We need to speak a different language."

Chapter 4: From Strength to Growth

Cheryl had a knack for social media but she was not a good teammate. She constantly pushed deadlines, increased scope last-minute, and dominated team meetings. The team respected her but felt bullied; they dropped hints, but I wasn't listening. If I had been, I would have done something about it.

Then two similar flare-ups happened within days. Twice, Cheryl failed to communicate scope changes, forcing her teammates to redo work. I had a steady stream of people coming by my office. That was my cue to step in. I was failing her as her manager. I literally couldn't see it—they're not called blind spots by accident.

Those micro-behaviors—the communication gaffes, the time-management oversights—are the liquid gold great mentors are looking for. I took Cheryl aside and asked about the staff meeting. She realized she'd messed up. Over the next few months, we went on a manager/employee journey. We defined the problem, assigned her the task of writing down the specific problem behaviors, discussed root causes, and made a plan. My commitment: I was not going to entertain any new initiatives from Cheryl if I was hearing her patterns weren't changing.

I sweat the smallest stuff: an unanswered email, a late project update, a tardy arrival. Being held accountable by your manager can be helpful. It can cut through noise and monotony. Cheryl discovered why she resisted focusing on details: "I've always seen my value as being the one who comes up with new ideas. What is my value here if I'm not doing what I'm good at?"

We call it "More Yoda, Less Superman"—pulling back the version of us that knows how to save the day so others can step up. Cheryl's transformation freed her to become a leader. She did not become a leader by doubling down on her strengths. She did it by putting those strengths on ice and focusing on the micro-behaviors.

Chapter 5: Sweat the Small Stuff

I'm not a good surfer, but I got lucky early on. What happened with Cheryl was also a bit of Good Authority beginner's luck. But over time, I developed a method we call "The Accountability Dial." Accountability is an unnatural skill, like surfing: you read the wave (the micro-behaviors on your team) and choose one to go for. If you don't, you didn't do any managing. People's small mistakes—miscommunication, time mismanagement—are liquid gold for mentors. Most managers attempt group announcements, hoping generic statements will motivate. But real growth starts by addressing specifics: First, by showing people how specific actions led to specific outcomes.

We measure culture health by the ability to feel the impacts of our actions on others. That inability causes dysfunction. Your job is to help people see their impact, let go of the emotional story they're telling themselves, and embrace honest change.

I divide micro-behaviors into five "OWNER" buckets:

1. **Own the Day:** Time mismanagement saps collective productivity.
2. **Walk Your Talk:** Missing deadlines or failing to respond forces others to pick up slack.
3. **Name the Challenge:** Being real about our limits is the greatest strength there is.
4. **Embrace Mistakes:** If we pretend it's okay, we miss out on the gap between where we are and where we want to be.
5. **Risk Being Right:** Encourage people to step up, speak their truth, and even challenge you.

Observe those tiny moments—both good and bad—and spark bigger conversations. In one way, the stakes are higher for them, because you're asking them to change core behavior. But if you stick with it, the long-term forecast for everyone is a good one.

PART II

Chapter 6: A New Agreement

We are a society in search of healing. In every city, we see endless counselors, coaches, and good people trying to make things better at work. But it still feels muddy when we talk about culture change. Why? Because we're bringing personal growth and spiritual ideas into the workplace without first changing the underlying agreement that governs it—the old belief that "work is for the boss."

We have to flip that. Ultimately, there can be no cultural evolution until its primary goal is to serve each individual. The CEO must open the door by admitting they don't know how to change things and inviting a new conversation. It's a vulnerable moment: "I don't know how to change it, but I want to start a new conversation. Okay?" That shift—the CEO changing their personal relationship to the old agreement—is the true beginning of culture change.

Then, everyone honors the new agreement by taking 100% responsibility for their actions, doing excellent work without being watched and speaking up when something isn't right. It's personal growth, which demands risk, requires vulnerability, and often means admitting that we hurt others unintentionally. **We don't get to look good and grow at the same time.**

Real growth happens through relationships, especially when the stakes are high. The workplace should be where we dive into personal growth, not avoid it. It means letting the people in our lives change us—exchanging the old ways of coping for the version of ourselves that we know is there but is hard to reach.

Chapter 7: The Art of Cultural Listening

It's hard to see how our behavior impacts others, especially for the CEO who can't fully experience working for themselves. Marcus, a CEO of a wearable-tech startup, discovered this firsthand. He thought his culture was top-notch: employees rated it 8.9 out of 10, and he worked right on the floor with everyone.

But then Suzanne, a senior salesperson, confided in him how a senior director, Dale, treated the women on the team. Marcus realized his team had no private and safe space to address sensitive issues like these with him. His "open workspace" had inadvertently silenced them.

Marcus rearranged the office to create private areas, then welcomed honest feedback. Employees started to share things that they had to keep hidden for years. Dale eventually apologized personally, and the women, instead of condemning him, supported his growth.

Marcus had to tackle the deeper problem—lack of psychological safety—in order to trigger a cultural healing that went far beyond physical office changes.

This demonstrates **cultural listening:** looking beyond obvious symptoms to unearth the real dynamics. People often don't speak up because they sense risk, or they communicate in coded ways. If people aren't raising issues, assume they've decided speaking up feels like sticking their neck out.

Marcus's story highlights three skills:

1. **Assume the disgruntled employee is a spokesperson.** Often the richest cultural data will come from a voice that's hard to hear.
2. **Assume the problem has collected interest over time.** Confronting it openly, even if awkward, can be transformative.
3. **Listen for what they mean behind what they say.** People often speak in coded ways. "I'd like a raise" can mean "I don't feel valued." "Sorry I'm late" can hint "I'm not inspired here."

As a manager, be part detective. When you sense a hidden story, just ask. You don't have to be a great leader to do this—by doing this you will become one.

Chapter 8: Accountability, a Love Story

I love new ideas. I love words. And if I have a superpower, it's translating a new idea into words a first-time listener can relate to. But that very strength also held me back—until accountability rescued me.

I was VP of a company, leading inbound marketing. My new CEO didn't share my background and kept peppering me with questions about how our efforts translated into leads, sales, and revenue. It felt like she didn't "get it." One weekend, after stewing over her endless queries, I realized, "I need to show her the relationship between all these numbers." So I created a single spreadsheet of visitors, contacts, marketing qualified leads, and sales qualified leads, showing how each step connected. On Monday, she was thrilled: "I finally see what you've been trying to tell me!"

That pivot changed everything. My team became crystal-clear on our goals, we refined our processes, and our sales-qualified leads surged. I saw how I'd used my beloved ideas to dodge the data that actually drove results. Accountability forced me to confront my blind spot, pushing me beyond my comfort zone to *own* my metrics.

That's the heart of good accountability: insisting people use their strengths responsibly. It's not about highlighting weaknesses; it's about helping each person fully deploy their talents. Without regular, real-time accountability, we risk "spontaneous management combustion"—problems fester, feedback comes too late, frustration boils over. By focusing on *who people are* instead of micromanaging tasks, we create a culture where mentoring, accountability, and growth happen every day.

Chapter 9: Micromanagement Reimagined

We usually see accountability as punishment—like we're in trouble. It starts when we're kids, facing authority figures who're either too tough or too soft. We bring that baggage into work, expecting accountability to mean getting yelled at or embarrassed. That's why many managers often talk about accountability but don't actually implement it.

This is where the Accountability Dial comes in. It's a five-step structure—Mention, Invitation, Conversation, Boundary, and Limit—that is meant to help us intervene early on subtle behaviors before they become big problems. Instead of micromanaging tasks, we focus on relationships and growth. Micromanagement comes from fear, whereas accountability comes from a desire to help people grow. So it's important to distinguish between the two.

1. **The Mention:** Briefly note the small behavior or concern. No lectures—just plant a seed.

2. **The Invitation:** If the behavior persists, invite a private talk. Use a warmer but firmer tone to show, “I’m still concerned, and I need you to take this seriously.”
3. **The Conversation:** Sit down with them, distraction-free, to address the root issues. This can lead to breakthrough growth, or it can mark the beginning of the end.
4. **The Boundary:** If changes still aren’t happening, you have a sober talk: “This must change now or your current role is in jeopardy.”
5. **The Limit:** The final step, which might mean letting them go. Even this can be a growth moment—for them, for you, and for the culture.

Yes, it’s extra work. But it’s worth it. What’s a few more weeks in the grand scheme of things? At the very least, your team sees you truly tried to help—sending a powerful message about the culture you’re building.

Chapter 10: The Perfect Conversation

Now, here’s a real-life example of the third notch on the Accountability Dial, the Conversation. This dialogue is drawn from a real-life situation involving CEO Catherine and her VP of Sales, Meredith, around ongoing accountability issues.

“Hey Meredith, I know we’ve been talking about it in different ways, but I’m still seeing that your team is having issues with accountability. Do you notice that?”

“Um. Well, kind of … yeah, it’s frustrating to me.”

“Okay, I believe you … have you given any more thought to why things aren’t changing?”

“Well I think we need some better procedures… I think that will really help.”

“Okay… but is there anything else you think might be causing it?”

“I’m not sure… Maybe I’m doing something wrong.”

“Let’s not think about it in terms of wrong or right. We’re just trying to get to the bottom of it so we can change things, okay?”

Meredith then admits she’s “not very good at holding people accountable,” often doing their work for them. Catherine helps her see how that enables laziness on the team. Meredith realizes, “I’ve been doing this with my husband, with my friends.” Catherine then shares her own struggle with wanting to be liked as well and choosing the comfort of fixing the problem temporarily instead of challenging people to grow.

They discuss how Meredith’s personal pattern impacts work: “What might happen if you take on less?” Meredith believes some teammates would rise to the challenge, and others might not. Catherine says, “We haven’t yet challenged them enough to find out.” By the end, Meredith agrees to hold herself accountable, too: “If they see me doing that then maybe it will rub off on them.”

This conversation teaches us important lessons. Catherine stays focused on deeper issues rather than quick fixes, reframes Meredith’s fears into opportunities, and models vulnerability herself. By engaging—not just instructing—she shows Meredith a path to real change.

PART III

Chapter 11: More Yoda, Less Superman

Remember that scene in Superman where he sat down after the rescue to make sure the person learned from their mistake, so he wouldn't have to save them again? Of course not—no superhero does that. A scene like that would burst the myth that our authority comes from solving problems and reaching goals. But if you want a culture where people own their work, you need to confront that myth within yourself.

A few years back, I was leading the marketing department of a consulting business. We planned a day-long creative session to revamp a coach training program. The night before, something hit me: "They don't need me there." So, I announced I'd skip the actual brainstorming, letting my team own the process. They ended up delivering beyond anything I'd imagined—faster, more creative, and with a contagious passion that spread throughout the company.

In Star Wars, Yoda never swoops in to solve Luke's problems. He stays by his side and challenges him. He doesn't hand out gold stars or do the work for Luke. In the same way, when I stepped back from micromanaging, my team discovered their own strengths, and I got to mentor them on the personal side of their work instead of hogging center stage.

But it was nerve-wracking. "If they do it without me, what's my value?" That fear is the existential pit of leadership despair. But moving from Superman to Yoda opens space for others to step up—and for you to find a new kind of leadership that's ultimately far more rewarding.

Putting down the cape means accepting that the strength that got you here may now be a limitation. You free others to take creative risks and learn. It might just change their lives. It will definitely change yours.

Chapter 12: Fixer, Fighter, or Friend?

Sometimes simply being in the room is a disempowering act. Whatever your background, there's an extremely high likelihood that the strength that got you this far has become a liability. Your opinion as the boss takes up more space, and it can keep others from finding their own voice.

There are three "superhero" leadership archetypes:

The Friend

Motto: "We're all on the same team."

Friends care deeply about people. They're great at creating a warm, family-like vibe. But using "family" at work is tricky—you can't fire family. To avoid seeming like a tyrant, Friends struggle with accountability, and problems go underground. When you have people's paychecks in your hands, you don't get to be one of the gang. By accepting that reality, Friends can finally hold the clear standards their team needs.

The Fighter

Motto: "Why wouldn't we?"

Fighters overflow with ideas; they want constant improvement and can be naturally inspiring. But they don't see how many projects their creativity spawns—or the overwhelm it causes. One idea from the CEO can easily create five projects. When Fighters slow down, focus on fewer ideas, and loop back to analyze results, their teams thrive.

The Fixer

Motto: “If you want it done right, you have to do it yourself.”

Fixers are meticulous and ensure quality, but they micromanage. They love being the hero, jumping in to “save the day,” but end up disempowering their teams. Their pivot is to step back and trust others. A Fixer might say, “I want to show you how much I trust you to take care of things in my absence.”

Whichever archetype fits you, remember, **Leadership is not a destination: It’s a process.** And less is almost always more.

Chapter 13: The Five Employee Archetypes

There are only three kinds of relationships in any organization: (1) you report to someone, (2) someone reports to you, or (3) you are peers. Many workplace problems arise from misunderstandings about how to relate with authority. The healthiest way is to stand for yourself and express what you feel while honoring the agreement between you.

Managers, in particular, inhabit the most complex role, with boss-subordinate and peer relationships all at once. While the three leadership archetypes (Fixer, Fighter, Friend) address how you relate to having authority, these five employee archetypes address how each person on your team relates to it:

1. The Pragmatist

Organized, considerate, and good at getting things done without drama, but too quick to minimize their own voice. They need nudges to share half-formed ideas and risk being more creative.

2. The Provocateur

Bursting with ideas, pushing boundaries—yet struggling with deadlines and details. They need firm boundaries and accountability, so they can channel their creativity effectively.

3. The Protector

Deeply empathic and sensitive, often bottling up personal burdens until it affects work. They need permission to be real about what they’re going through. Emotional transparency, not drama, helps them thrive.

4. The Peacemaker

Evasive in conflict, prone to taking on too much without admitting knowledge gaps. They need encouragement to voice frustrations and questions, learning that healthy conflict can deepen connection.

5. The Performer

Technically skilled but sometimes stuck in old habits. They need reminders to stay flexible, look up from their craft, and collaborate—often discovering an untapped leadership side.

Use these archetypes gently, keeping all feedback about the work. Show how a person’s behavior impacts metrics, teammates, or the customer experience. When individuals find personal growth through accountability at work, they pursue their self-interests and the team's goals at the same time.

Chapter 14: Pull The Thread

We live in an interesting time. We're not the first generations to feel this way, but we are at a pivotal moment. We're being held accountable for our choices. We're invited to look in the mirror, to stop our self-destructive patterns, and to see the consequences if we don't. That can be depressing—or it can be the greatest gift.

The paradox lies in the word "change." We often treat change as a destination, when it's really an ongoing process. Change is not where we're going, it's who we are. Once we genuinely let go of the past, we find that the act of changing itself isn't uncomfortable—only the prospect of it is. We cling to certainty for a sense of control. But the moment we allow ourselves not to have all the answers, we actually relax. We open up to creativity and innovation.

That's the choice you face every day: to choose wonder over certainty. Whether you lead a small team, run a global organization, or are a parent of one, true leadership is a gift that works both ways. You become more of who you are by helping others do the same—meeting people where they are, pushing them a little further, then letting them learn from the fall. When they realize they had it in themselves all along, you can rest and celebrate with them.

And when that moment passes, take a walk down the hall and start again.