



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## SERIES

# THE SUMMARY OF TRUST & INSPIRE

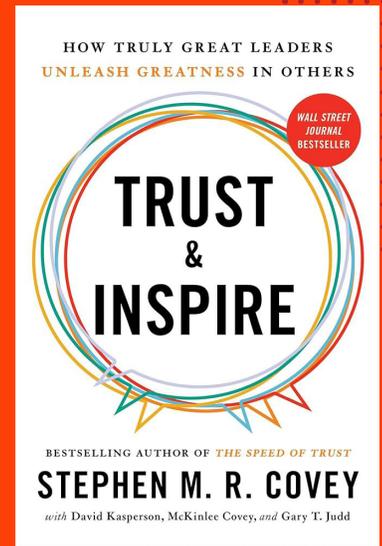
By Stephen M. R. Covey  
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## Introduction

The highest temperature ever recorded on earth—134°F on July 10, 1913, in Death Valley—helps explain why nothing grows there (one to two inches of rain a year, once only half an inch in forty months). However, in spring 2005, six inches of rain fell, and a rich carpet of wildflowers burst forth. As Sir Ken Robinson quipped, maybe it should be called “Dormant Valley.” People, too, have dormant seeds of greatness that only the right conditions—like those six inches of rain—can awaken.

For decades, most leaders have acted like “machinists,” prioritizing tasks over people in a *Command & Control* style. But does that work?

Instead, Socrates reminds us that “The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms.” So let’s define a new paradigm: *Trust & Inspire*. Rather than contain and coerce, these leaders trust people to do the right thing and inspire them to make meaningful contributions, connecting them to purpose, meaning, and belonging.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Think of a *Command & Control* boss—rules, restrictions, barking out orders—and you'll likely feel frustration or anger. Now recall someone who trusted you, gave you chances—you feel gratitude, confidence, fulfillment. That's the power of *Trust & Inspire*.

Consider one family-owned company where executives complained, "Can we just get real here? Our biggest problem is that we're managed by a control freak!" Senior, the founder, refused to hand over leadership to his capable son. "For crying out loud, Junior is sixty-seven years old!" they all agreed he was "ready"—but Senior wouldn't let go.

Or my own childhood lesson: my dad taught me yard work by defining my job as "green and clean," showing me examples, then saying, "It's up to you how you want to do it." Even after weeks of inaction, he resisted yelling and simply asked, "How's it going?" When I tearfully admitted it was "so hard," he offered help—but only when asked, reaffirming our original deal. Because I felt trusted, I took ownership, cleaned the yard, and gained confidence.

As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "A great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves." To inspire ("to breathe life into"), we must see and unleash the greatness within others.

## PART ONE

# The Future of Leadership: From Command & Control to Trust & Inspire

### Chapter 1: The World Has Changed, Our Style of Leadership Has Not

My father always opened our seminars with two punch-in-the-gut questions: "By a raise of hands, how many of you believe the vast majority of your workforce possess far more talent, creativity, ingenuity, intelligence, and ability than their jobs require?"—every hand shoots up. "And how many believe that same workforce is under immense and growing pressure to produce substantially more for less?"—same sea of hands. That gap, Gandhi said, "would solve most of the world's problems," yet we still march under Command & Control while the world races ahead.

Work, workplace, workforce, world, and choice have all shape-shifted. Tech is piling change on change—AI, VR, bio-sciences—knowledge now doubles every twelve hours. Work is mostly collaborative brain-

work; the office is anywhere; teams mix five generations and every imaginable background; and technology has yanked us from multiple choice to infinite choice. These Five Emerging Forces demand a new playbook. Win the workplace with high trust, win the marketplace with relentless innovation, or get left behind. Cell phones that dwarf moon-shot computers mock the nineteenth-century carrot-and-stick rituals we still use to motivate people.

Satya Nadella showed the alternative. When he took over Microsoft in 2014, the place was bureaucracy replacing innovation, politics replacing teamwork. He modeled humility, empathy, and a growth mindset, trusted and inspired 100,000 people, and flipped the culture. Market value leaped from \$300 billion to over \$2 trillion. Same story in a little school that swapped a benevolent *Command & Control* princi-

pal for one who believed in teachers—morale soared, turnover tanked, kids learned more.

Command & Control leans on position and power, wrings out compliance, stays transactional, and manages people like things. Trust & Inspire bets on people and potential, invites commitment, transforms, manages things, leads people. Motivation pushes with carrot or stick; inspiration breathes life into work. As Simon Sinek puts it, “You can manipulate or you can inspire.”

Indra Nooyi wrote hundreds of heartfelt letters to the parents of PepsiCo leaders, thanking them for raising great sons and daughters—people felt seen, valued, inspired. Leadership is a choice, not a position. Gandhi, Malala, Pedro Medina—all led without a title. Wherever we are—office, classroom, kitchen table—we can extend trust, spark inspiration, and watch people rise to their own greatness.

## Chapter 2: The Increasing Irrelevance of Command & Control

Nothing fails like success. Toynbee said societies crush new problems with yesterday’s answers until the old fix sinks the boat. Buffett’s line nails it: patching leaks is useless—change vessels. Blockbuster is Exhibit A. In 2000 it boasted 9,000 stores, 84,000 employees, and \$6 billion revenue. Then Netflix mailed DVDs, then streamed, then no late fees. Blockbuster clung to stores and penalties, cannibal-shy and slow. Now one lonely shop sits in Bend, Oregon, while Netflix keeps disrupting itself.

Command & Control is Blockbuster leadership—a relic we keep patching. The Five Emerging Forces scream for something else: win the workplace, win the marketplace. Culture decides whether you attract, retain, engage, inspire. One East-Coast business school lost a star professor because its travel policy demanded a paper boarding pass the airline

never issued. Message received: we don’t trust you. Trust & Inspire cultures, by contrast, are magnets. Millennials “don’t want to be managed, they want to be led,” but so do Gen X and Boomers—trust raises engagement fourteen-fold, inspiration boosts productivity fifty-six percent over mere engagement.

Market wins now ride on collaboration and innovation. Command & Control breeds fear; people coordinate at best, hide mistakes, color inside the lines. Trust unleashes true collaboration—Porter Lynch says innovation “flourishes where there’s a collision of differences in an environment of trust.” LRN found employees in high-trust cultures are thirty-two times more likely to take responsible risks and eleven times more likely to innovate. Tim Cook sums it up: “Without the possibility of failure there is no possibility of success.”

Zoom’s Eric Yuan lives this. Speed is his “primary weapon,” but, he says, “without trust, we have no speed.” Glassdoor ranks him with a 99 percent CEO approval. Trust bought the velocity that put Zoom on every screen.

So why do we still default to Command & Control? Fish discover water last. Military vocabulary—mission, chain of command, span of control—still shapes offices, schools, homes. We know better but we still keep doing it; Goethe warned, “To know and not to do is not to know.” Command & Control is our native tongue; Trust & Inspire must be learned.

Command & Control’s expiration date has passed. Time to change boats and Trust & Inspire before success fails us again.

## Chapter 3: Style Is Getting in the Way of Intent

A Fortune 50 survey stunned everyone: senior leaders rated their own caring at 99 percent, but only 31

percent of employees actually felt cared about—a sixty-eight-point gulf that bleeds trust and performance. FranklinCovey's Team Trust Index keeps exposing the same pattern: leaders' intent may be positive, but their style scrambles the signal. As Indra Nooyi's father advised, "Always assume positive intent," but good intent still collapses when style shouts something else. I've slipped into heavy Command & Control with my kids under stress; my love for them is real, but they just don't feel it.

We all judge ourselves by intent and others by behavior. So we need mirror checks: "Is what I meant coming through?" That starts with recognizing our meta-style—the overarching lens that drives every sub-style. Command & Control and Trust & Inspire sit at opposite ends of that spectrum. Authoritative, transactional, coaching—those are sub-styles that still ride on one meta-style or the other. Paradigm first, tactics second.

Style is also a choice. Art Barter proved it. Once a hard-charging, Command & Control CEO in a cut-throat market, he embraced servant leadership, flipped his paradigm to Trust & Inspire, and revenues shot from \$10 million to \$200 million in six years. He'd always cared about people, but matching style to

intent unleashed their talent. Any sub-style can wear a Command & Control mask; even a humble servant leader who can't let go is just Enlightened Command & Control with a smile.

Micromanagement is Command & Control's purest form. I watched a gifted pastor lose influence because he second-guessed every decision. Congregants trusted him, but felt he didn't trust them. People follow by choice; without trust you get grudging compliance at best.

Enlightened Command & Control has added integrity, perks, emotional intelligence—"happy cows give more milk." But the paradigm is still containment, not release. Real change demands crossing the chasm, confronting our unconscious bias about whom we trust, and shifting to Trust & Inspire. As soon as we do, behavior aligns with intent, belief ripples outward, and teams move from motivation to inspiration.

Principles, not position, ultimately govern human effectiveness. Trust & Inspire taps timeless laws, so it works in any era, culture, or context. Command & Control is past its expiration date; style must now serve intent, not sabotage it.

## PART TWO

# Becoming a Trust & Inspire Leader: The Fundamental Beliefs and 3 Stewardships

### Chapter 4: The Fundamental Beliefs of a Trust & Inspire Leader

I pitched this book to my editor, Stephanie, and her boss, Jonathan. I laid out the chasm between Command & Control and Trust & Inspire and called Enlightened Command & Control a relic of the

industrial age. They got it at once. Jonathan admitted publishing itself runs on Command & Control. Stephanie jumped in: "True—but you're Trust & Inspire. The way you lead is why I came here." That culture of trust and empowerment makes sense in an industry built on creativity and constant flux—

and, unsurprisingly, Jonathan was just named CEO of the whole company because of *how* he gets results.

Why do leaders like Jonathan feel different? Their behavior springs from deeper, more expansive beliefs about people and leadership. Command & Control sticks to narrow labels; Trust & Inspire starts with enduring principles and lets actions flow from them. Think of a paradigm as a pair of glasses: the right lens clarifies, the wrong one blurs. The Trust & Inspire lens rests on five core beliefs:

1. People have greatness inside them, so my job is to unleash potential, not control it.
2. People are whole people—body, heart, mind, spirit—so my job is to inspire, not merely motivate.
3. There is enough for everyone, so my job is to elevate caring above competing.
4. Leadership is stewardship, so my job is to put service above self-interest.
5. Enduring influence is created from the inside out, so my job is to go first.

A Trust & Inspire leader sees every teammate, student, or child as a fountain of greatness. Like gardeners, they can't force growth; they create conditions so the seed's own power wakes up. They actively **look** for that greatness, **say** they see it, **develop** it, and then **unleash** it—an upward cycle of see, communicate, develop, unleash. Command & Control sees power in the position and settles for compliance, suffocating potential.

They also treat people as whole beings. Paychecks answer only physical needs; people also crave connection, challenge, and meaning. You can command hands and backs, but only inspiration lights hearts and minds. External carrots and sticks might move bodies, but they mute creativity and joy. Light the

fire within and people give their best freely—and keep giving it.

An abundance mindset replaces scarcity's jealous scramble. If someone else gets a muffin, we just bake more. We complete one another instead of competing internally and save competition for the marketplace.

Finally, Trust & Inspire leaders feel stewardship. The role itself is a trust; service outranks self-interest, and the ripple always starts inside. They **go first**, listen first, admit mistakes first, extend trust first, because influence that lasts must begin with the example we set.

Taken together these beliefs form a richer, more accurate map of people and leadership, one that frees everyone to rise to their own greatness.

## Chapter 5: The 1st Stewardship: Modeling, or 'Who You Are'

A year into the job a new CEO emailed every employee: true leaders are chosen by teammates, not boards—click this link and vote whether I stay. Ninety-five percent answered, 97 percent said yes. He had earned that trust by modeling humility, courage, authenticity, vulnerability, empathy—and performance. Albert Schweitzer nailed it: "Example is not the main thing in influencing others; it's the only thing." Like it or not, if we're breathing, we're modeling. Modeling is who we are, the source of credibility and moral authority. Credibility demands both character and competence; one without the other collapses trust. Moral authority isn't a title—it's earned by who you are and how you lead. Ken Chenault, longtime American Express CEO, embodied that truth; people followed him because of his example, not his rank.

Trust & Inspire leaders model six paired virtues:

**Humility** keeps ego in check; **courage** tackles the hard right over the easy wrong. **Authenticity** means “to be rather than to seem”; **vulnerability** is the gateway that lets others see it. **Empathy**: listening to understand, not to reply, gives people psychological air, while **performance** delivers the results that convert cynics. Model any one without its partner and you limp; model both and people run with you.

Cheryl Bachelder proved it at Popeyes. She inherited plummeting sales, mistrustful franchisees, and an \$11 stock. First thirty days she shut her mouth and listened. She told Wall Street franchisees came first, then fixed every complaint. Unit sales jumped 45 percent, market share doubled, stock hit \$79, six hundred new restaurants opened. She dared to serve, and the numbers followed.

Intentional modeling follows the Greek path: Ethos (credibility), Pathos (relationship), Logos (logic), in that order. People close their ears to advice and open their eyes to example. So leaders go first: apologize first, keep a commitment first, extend trust first. Three aligned lives, public, private, inner, create authenticity so deep you need no notes, like Gandhi whose “life was his message.”

Modeling starts with the mirror. Would I follow me? Do I radiate humility and courage, authenticity and vulnerability, empathy and performance? If not, change begins inside. Skills can’t replace character; tactics can’t replace competence. Everyone is a model; the only question is what we’re modeling.

## Chapter 6: The 2nd Stewardship: Trusting, or ‘How You Lead’

Think back to the person who first believed in you more than you believed in yourself; the one whose confidence made you rise. For me it was John Walsh

at Trammell Crow. Thirteen partners had turned me down; John said, “He’s raw, but I trust him,” and hired me. That vote transformed my trajectory and I worked like crazy to prove it justified.

Trust isn’t just about being trustworthy. Two honorable people can still work in suspicion if neither is willing to extend trust. Trust = trustworthiness × trusting. Command-and-Control managers often score high on the first factor and low on the second; their style blocks their good intent. Research shows employees rate bosses almost 3 times lower on “trusting” than the bosses rate themselves, so the jump from Enlightened Command-and-Control to Trust & Inspire hinges on learning to give trust—frequently, explicitly, and smartly.

Trusting is the second stewardship, the “how” of leadership. It starts with clear expectations and mutual accountability—prevention, not cleanup. Jim Cash, three days into leading Pepperdine University, asked a dean only two questions: was the decision your best thinking, and was it fair? Hearing “yes,” he replied, “I trust you—go ahead.” That single gesture set a collaborative tone for his cabinet and sped every later conversation.

Extending trust is the fastest way to grow people. It makes them rise to the occasion, develop new capabilities, and pay the trust forward. Zappos reps perform without scripts because the company trusts their judgment; customers get “wow” service and sales climb. Julia Hartz accepted the CEO seat at Eventbrite feeling unprepared, but her board’s trust pushed her to master the role, build a world-class culture, and earn “Best Place to Work” honors. David Novak revived KFC by declaring, “I love franchisees,” trusting them to innovate; pot pie and crispy strips doubled profits in three years.

Trust must be visible. Siemens’ “mobile working” plan lets 400,000 employees choose where they’re

most productive two or three days a week because leadership trusts and empowers them; Mary Barra's two-word policy at GM is "Work Appropriately." Both spell out intent and boundaries so accountability feels like partnership, not policing.

When my daughter McKinlee cut a mouthy six-foot-three sophomore named Leo from her volleyball try-outs, he begged for another chance. She laid out standards, trusted him, and he became captain, mentor, and school athlete of the year. One deliberate extension of trust unlocked talent everyone else had missed.

Risk attends trust, but not trusting is usually the bigger hazard: it starves growth, drains joy, and slows everything. Someone once passed that torch to you; now ask yourself, Whom can I believe in aloud, right now? No act of trust is ever wasted, because its worth lies not in the pay-back but in the choice to lead with it.

## Chapter 7: The 3rd Stewardship: Inspiring, or 'Connecting to Why'

Wayne Gretzky said he skated "to where the puck is going," and leadership's puck is gliding toward inspiration. Motivation or engagement alone no longer satisfies people who want to feel alive at work and in life. Gallup shows half of employees quit to escape a boss, and 75 percent say that boss is the main source of stress. Zenger Folkman's data confirm the single attribute employees crave—and rarely receive—is a leader who "inspires to high performance."

Inspiration rests on the belief that people are whole—body, heart, mind, spirit—and that a leader's stewardship is to awaken the fire inside rather than control from outside. That begins by finding one's own why: the authentic reason you rise each morning. When you're clear on what matters to you, your

energy becomes contagious. From there, inspiration flows outward through three relationship layers. First comes caring for individuals; genuine interest, empathy and compassion signal, "You matter." Second is creating belonging within the team so each person feels part of something larger than self; shared ownership transforms a group of coworkers into a community. Third is tying everyday tasks to purpose, meaning and contribution so the work itself answers, "Why does this matter?"

Purpose is deeper than formal mission or values; it is the lived connection between effort and impact. A NASA janitor who said he was "helping put a man on the moon," or Nike's vow to bring innovation "to every athlete" (anyone with a body), illustrate how even mundane roles become callings when linked to a noble outcome. People will shovel dirt for a wage, but they'll build cathedrals for a cause. Money motivates hands; meaning mobilizes hearts.

Success—status, pay, security—eventually feels hollow unless it evolves into significance, the sense that one's work improves lives. Millennials are famous for seeking purpose, but studies show Baby Boomers rate even higher; the desire to matter spans generations. Leaders therefore must become "co-purposers," overlapping individual aspirations with organizational aims so both flourish.

Inspiration is learnable. It does not require charisma; authenticity trumps charm. Teachers, nurses, parents, frontline supervisors—anyone can inspire by consistently modeling humility, courage, empathy and performance, by extending trust with clear expectations and mutual accountability, and by connecting people to a compelling *why*.

Satya Nadella's turnaround of Microsoft proves the power of all three stewardships—modeling, trusting and inspiring—working in concert. His humility,

expansive trust and clear purpose unleashed talent, doubled market share and lifted market value past \$2 trillion. When leaders ignite significance in others, they elevate results and well-being simultaneously. The task now is to move with the puck: make inspiring others the essence of how you lead.

## Chapter 8: Stewardship Agreements

Leaders often feel torn between hitting targets and nurturing relationships, but those aims are inseparable. Results gained while eroding trust rarely endure, and warm relationships that neglect performance soon founder. The way to dissolve that false choice is to treat leadership as stewardship: you hold something precious—people and outcomes—on behalf of others, so you must deliver both.

Operating from abundance rather than scarcity, a steward believes every person carries undeveloped potential and deserves to be trusted. That belief takes practical shape in a “stewardship agreement,” a shared, flexible contract that sets clear expectations and creates mutual accountability without heavy supervision. My father’s childhood “green-and-clean” deal with yardwork is a miniature version: I owned the result, chose the method, and judged myself each week as we walked the grass together. The same structure serves teams, departments, even remote workers scattered across time zones.

Five elements anchor any agreement. First, **specify the results**—the concrete “what” and its reason—so no one guesses at success. Second, **outline guidelines**: principles, boundaries, and watch-outs that protect values while giving wide latitude on method. Third, **identify resources**—skills, money, tools, mentoring—so the person is set up to win. Fourth, **establish accountability** as a regular, agreed-upon check-in; the performer reports, the leader coaches,

and self-evaluation replaces surveillance. Finally, **name consequences**, positive or negative, natural not arbitrary, so everyone knows the stakes before work begins.

Crafted together, these agreements shift the relationship from vertical boss–subordinate to horizontal partners. They work because the agreement, not the manager’s mood, governs. In a hybrid world where old-style monitoring is impossible—or feels like digital spying—such clarity lets people supervise themselves and still deliver. When conditions change, the partners simply revisit the agreement and adjust; it is written in pencil, not stone.

I have watched this approach revive disengaged employees, calm tense franchise networks, and energize entrepreneurial talents who would have bolted under tighter control. It demands trust up front—leaders must release their grip on process—but the payoff is commitment and creativity impossible to compel. Should someone fall short, you bring them back to the agreement, address behavior not character, and, if necessary, renegotiate resources or guidelines rather than yank back control.

Used consistently, stewardship agreements recast managers as coaches and colleagues as self-directed professionals. They honor the dual duty to produce excellent work and grow capable people. By adopting this tool, leaders stop asking, “Should I finish the task or care for the person?” and instead accomplish both in a single, integrated act of stewardship.

## Chapter 9: What Trust & Inspire Is ‘Not’

Trust & Inspire isn’t a soft, laissez-faire alternative to “real” leadership; it simply wields power differently. Conventional bosses see a trade-off: finish the task or nurture the relationship. Stewards reject that false

choice. Results and relationships rise together when leaders operate from an abundance mind-set and view every colleague as a trust-worthy, whole person whose potential can be released, not controlled.

That stance looks anything but weak. Owning mistakes, listening deeply, ceding method while insisting on outcomes, or apologizing when wrong each demand more courage than barking orders. Command & Control success is capped by the leader's own strengths; Trust & Inspire multiplies everyone's strengths, creating far greater collective power.

This approach doesn't discard controls. Rules, metrics and compliance still matter—safety, ethics and budgeting remain non-negotiable—but they rest on self-management. A culture where people feel trusted and accountable actually delivers tighter, not looser, control than a rule-bound bureaucracy, because engagement replaces surveillance and people govern themselves.

Structure isn't jettisoned; it is redesigned to fit today's fluid, tech-enabled work. Hierarchies flatten, teams form and dissolve quickly, decision rights shift outward, but clear frameworks always persist. If an organization keeps rearranging its chart without changing its leadership style, structure isn't the problem—the mind-set is.

Clear vision and decisive direction don't need to be sacrificed either. Leaders still set the course, but they shape it with wide input and win genuine commitment rather than reluctant compliance. Howard

Schultz's mission "to inspire and nurture the human spirit" guides Starbucks even while partners tweak drinks and store formats; the North Star stays fixed while methods evolve.

High expectations and fierce accountability remain central. Trust flowers when expectations are explicit and performance is reviewed against mutually agreed metrics. Because employees co-create the standards, they judge themselves more stringently than any supervisor could, and a breach calls them back to the agreement, not the boss's anger. Leaders demand excellence precisely because they believe greatness is inside each person.

Are there moments to abandon Trust & Inspire—say, a toddler dashing into traffic or a plant emergency? No. The style governs intent, not the speed of response. You can act instantly, even commandingly, while your underlying relationship of respect, belief and care remains intact. Behavior that protects while honoring the person is interpreted as love, not domination.

Trust & Inspire is a way of being, a lens for every context—hospital ward, factory line, classroom, family dinner. It asks leaders to see themselves as stewards: they hold people and performance in trust, using vision, structure, controls and high standards in service of human potential. Adopting it need not upend operations, but it will transform outcomes, because when people feel trusted and inspired they choose to give their best—every time.

## PART THREE

# Overcoming the 5 Common Barriers to Becoming a Trust & Inspire Leader

### Chapter 10: Barrier #1: “This Won’t Work Here”

People often insist a Trust & Inspire approach could never function in their particular setting: “you don’t know my boss, my industry, our regulations, quarterly targets, time pressure, family dynamics.” To surface these objections, write them down, mark those unchangeable in the circle of concern, and circle those you might influence. Every context carries constraints, but no company, school, hospital, agency, team, or household fails to benefit when someone begins to model and extend trust. You cannot manage your boss, but you can lead by going first, working from the inside out.

Most cultures suffer from the “I’m okay—the problem is everybody else” mindset. Assessments show individuals routinely rate their own credibility and inspiration high while scoring colleagues low; everyone thinks others must change. That stance breeds victimhood: if the issue sits outside me, I feel helpless, blame structures and systems, and wait. Structures and systems are only programs written by people; style flows from paradigm. Shift the paradigm and new programs follow.

When people say Trust & Inspire “won’t work here,” the remedy is simple: first model, then mentor. Become an island of excellence in a sea of mediocrity, an island of trust amid micromanagement, an island of inspiration amid indifference. Begin with your own credibility and behavior; that is fully inside your circle of influence. As performance and relationships improve, others notice and ask how. Move from merely showing to personally guiding—mentor those who seek help and the ripple widens.

A mid-level leader named Janita shows this process. In a hard-driving Command & Control corporation she applied Trust & Inspire only within her team. Results and morale jumped. Colleagues requested her playbook; she coached them. The wave reached the CEO, who spotlighted her group as the organizational model. Despite economic turmoil, the culture tipped and the company emerged stronger, while Janita earned promotion. She never waited for permission; she started where she stood.

Modeling and mentoring disprove the “won’t work here” story because they change the only place real power resides—yourself—and then spreads outward. Even when legal requirements, compliance rules, or external markets are fixed, you can alter how you talk about them, how you collaborate around them, and how you treat people inside them. Ask not “can I?” but “how can I?” Identify one relationship, one process, one conversation where you can practice Trust & Inspire today. Write a small stewardship agreement, extend smart trust, hold a transparent check-in. As soon as you act, the barrier begins to dissolve, and you prove by experience that this does work here, because you made it work.

### Chapter 11: Barrier #2: Fear—or “But What If...”

Anytime we face a tough choice or a fresh approach, the mind jumps to “But what if...?” questions. Five common fears block the shift from Command & Control to Trust & Inspire:

### 1. “But what if I lose control?”

Rules feel safer, but no stack of rules can out-control a distrusted workforce. Nordstrom runs on a single card: “Use good judgment in all situations.” People rise to that trust and police themselves.

**Solution:** extend *smart trust*—assess risk and credibility, then grant latitude.

**Mind-set:** start with a *high propensity to trust*.

### 2. “But what if it doesn’t work?”

Leaders own outcomes; failure seems fatal. But hanging on to yesterday’s style is the bigger hazard. Amazon’s Jeff Bezos writes, “Failure and invention are inseparable twins,” and warns that being slow costs more than being wrong.

**Solution:** *balance risk and return*—ask what might go right with an empowered, inspired team.

**Mind-set:** believe *the potential return outweighs the risk*.

### 3. “But what if I’ve been burned before?”

Betrayal hurts; withholding trust feels protective. Some people truly can’t be trusted, but letting the 5 percent dictate terms for the 95 percent cripples leadership. A CEO told his audit chief, “If you can’t trust, you can’t lead.”

**Solution:** don’t let the one tell you about the many; *use judgment*, extend trust where merited.

**Mind-set:** most people can and *want* to be trusted.

### 4. “But what if I don’t get the credit?”

Scarcity thinking says the pie is finite; another’s success diminishes mine. True excellence is lifting others higher. Harry Truman noted, “It’s amazing what you can accomplish... when you don’t care who gets the credit.”

**Solution:** adopt an *abundance mentality*; there is enough recognition, opportunity, significance for all.

**Mind-set:** others’ wins do not reduce my own.

### 5. “But what if I’m not as confident as you think I am?”

Imposter syndrome strikes 70 percent of people; self-doubt triggers bravado, micromanagement, or silence.

**Solution:** build credibility by modeling the virtue pairs; humility & courage, authenticity & vulnerability, empathy & performance.

**Mind-set:** I increase self-trust and help others do the same.

Fear is a reaction; trust is a choice. Violating principles is like trying to violate gravity; aligning with them yields predictable lift. High-trust cultures hold more control than rules-bound ones, fuel innovation eleven-fold, and inspire self-discipline. Ask not “What if it fails?” but “What if it succeeds?” When leaders extend trust wisely, balance risk with return, refuse scarcity, and nurture credibility, self-trust grows stronger than fear—and the virtuous cycle of trust, confidence, and performance begins.

## Chapter 12: Barrier #3: “I Don’t Know How to Let Go”

Watching someone else do a task “wrong”—a teen jamming dishes in the washer or folding clothes

half-heartedly—tempts us to snatch it back: “If you want something done right, do it yourself.” The same reflex surfaces at work or in volunteer roles. We redo, or never delegate, and the people we invite to help feel disenfranchised. My kids saw this when youth leaders asked them to plan an event, then swooped in and “fixed” everything; the adults got smoother results, but the teens walked away bitter.

Clutching control damages morale and smothers creativity. But letting go doesn’t mean abandoning structure. Trust & Inspire leaders still set clear expectations, guidelines, and accountability, often through stewardship agreements, but they also:

- accept a high tolerance for failure,
- focus on learning and course correction,
- remember that greatness is in the seed, not the gardener.

One high-school teacher let go of the one-size-fits-all assignment and told students their final project could be anything that showed mastery of the competencies. Within those guardrails she released control, and the class produced films, robots, paintings, poems, even a choreographed dance. Quiet students blossomed; months later some formed a band around a project poem, now a song on Spotify. None of that would have emerged under Command & Control.

Policies can be the same kind of grip. Many are relics of the industrial age or scar tissue from some past burn. Ask: “If we didn’t already have this rule, would we create it today?” A regional grocery chain learned the cost of clinging when a regular customer brought back cracked eggs without a receipt. Cashier and manager, bound by the “no receipt, no refund” rule, refused the return despite the logo stamped on the carton. The shopper vowed never to return. Leadership, mortified, scrapped the policy and several like it,

empowering employees to use judgment instead of hiding behind rules. Since loosening their grip they’ve built one of the most trusted food brands and logged nine straight years of same-store sales growth.

Letting go, within smart boundaries, frees others to grow, innovate, and own results. Failure becomes a path to competence, not a proof of incompetence. The gardener can’t yank the seed through the soil; the seed must break ground on its own.

### **Chapter 13: Barrier #4: “I’m the Smartest One in the Room”**

Many leaders say they want “the best idea to win,” but their meetings prove otherwise. One president began every session with that slogan, then pushed his own plan; people learned the ritual, quit offering ideas, and the business lost untapped insight. He really believed he was open-minded—but his style shouted, I’m the smartest one in the room. When those signals clash with intent, teams disengage, knowing the outcome is pre-decided. It is almost easier to work for someone who bluntly says, “I’ll make the call,” than for a boss who feigns collaboration but ignores every contribution.

The smartest-in-the-room trap shows up whenever a leader silently ranks others as inferior, asks for input he will not use, or feels threatened by colleagues’ competence. Staff grow cynical; great ideas never surface; the leader stands alone, often wrong but never in doubt. A health-care group told me administrators kept soliciting feedback but implemented none of it, demoralizing nurses who soon stopped trying.

A Trust & Inspire leader flips that pattern by becoming a multiplier: someone who enlarges thinking, shares credit, and draws on everyone’s strengths. Indra Nooyi modeled this when she won the PepsiCo CEO role.

Rather than consolidate power, she urged rival finalist Mike White to stay, telling him she needed his capabilities. Their combined talents took the company to new heights because she did not fear another strong voice at the table.

If you catch yourself assuming you are the sole expert, apply a three-step reset:

- **Begin with humility.** Care more about *what* is right than *who* is right; park the ego at the door.
- **Listen first and show respect for what you hear.** Genuine listening, without rehearsing your rebuttal, signals that people and their ideas matter; it turns a bucket of feedback into a well of creativity.
- **Adopt a growth mindset for others, not just yourself.** Command & Control leaders often invest in their own development yet label teammates as fixed. Trust & Inspire leaders see latent greatness and coach it forward, knowing no single gardener can outgrow a nurtured seed.

Combine those habits and the room gets smarter than any one person. As Mother Teresa observed, “You can do what I cannot; I can do what you cannot; together we can do great things.” True intelligence is multiplying everyone’s gifts—because *none of us is as smart as all of us*.

## Chapter 14: Barrier #5: “This Is Who I Am”

Most of us have felt tempted to shrug, “This is just who I am— I can’t change.” Those phrases—“What can you do?” “It is what it is”—sound comforting, but in reality they lock us into a fixed mindset. Most leaders were raised on Command & Control models at home, school, sports, the military, and early work; the habits run deep and can seem permanent. Besides,

that style probably “worked” on the climb up, so the voice inside whispers: why switch now?

But, as Marshall Goldsmith warns, “what got you here won’t get you there.” The disruptive, multi-generational world quickly renders yesterday’s style obsolete. We can, and must, rescript ourselves. We are not the program; we are the “programmers”.

Consider the Yellow Pages ad rep whose industry disappeared, or professionals displaced by COVID. They faced a choice: cling to “who I’ve always been” or rewrite the code. Leaders are continually “reborn” through the choices they make.

Three keys to rescripting:

1. **Find new models.** If Command & Control is all you’ve seen, deliberately seek Trust & Inspire examples and study them.
2. **Seek mentors.** Work with people who already lead the way you hope to; let their pattern overwrite the old script.
3. **Practice, iterate, repeat.** We learn, unlearn, relearn—updating our own operating system as the context shifts.

April Wensel did exactly that. Early in tech she embodied the “jerk programmer” ethos of ego and elitism; burnout followed. She re-examined her values, placed compassion at the center, and founded *Compassionate Coding* to teach engineers a people-first approach, proof that a hard-wired style can be rewritten.

Ralph Stayer, longtime CEO of Johnsonville Sausage, saw profits but sagging morale. After realizing *he* was the bottleneck, he abandoned micro-decision-making, adopted Trust & Inspire, and codified “The Johnsonville Way,” turning employees into owners of quality and growth.

Andy Pearson, once labeled one of Fortune’s “toughest bosses” at PepsiCo, likewise transformed. Lured from retirement to chair Yum! Brands, he embraced CEO David Novak’s recognition-rich culture, becoming a champion of collaboration rather than command.

Personal trauma can be rescripted too. Kidnapping survivor Elizabeth Smart refused to let nine horrific months define her. Choosing a different story, she

built a foundation that aids other victims and speaks worldwide: “We are the masters of our fate. We decide how we react to life.”

So when the old mantra arises—“I am what I am”—counter with a programmer’s mindset: “I choose the next update.” Habit is strong, but imagination is stronger. Rescripting opens limitless possibilities for you, your team, and everyone you influence.

## PART FOUR The New Way to Lead in a New World

### Chapter 15: Trust & Inspire in Any Context: Parenting, Teaching, Coaching... and More

As public, private, and inner spheres blur, everyone is summoned to lead—at work, at home, and within. Trust & Inspire begins with becoming that kind of person, convinced there is greatness in people, including ourselves, and intent on releasing it in daily settings. Picture a role that matters to you—parent, manager, volunteer, friend—and ask: am I a Command-and-Control \_\_\_\_\_ or a Trust-and-Inspire \_\_\_\_\_? Whichever style you choose radiates to coworkers, kids, clients, neighbors. A single encounter can elevate or diminish.

Consider parenting. A three-year-old Jonathan Horton scales a thirty-foot Target pole; instead of scolding, his parents channel the energy into gymnastics, laying the path to Olympic medals. Command-and-Control parents aim for obedience; Trust-and-Inspire parents act like gardeners, nurturing discipline and discovery so children govern themselves. They model integrity, extend age-appropriate trust, family meetings, shared stewardship agreements, and inspire by connecting to what matters to the child. The question

is not “How do I force a clean room?” but “How do I grow a capable, self-disciplined person?”

Teaching offers parallel lessons. Regulations and test scores press schools toward control, but students thrive when educators trust, believe, and connect. A first-year teacher who begins by asserting credentials soon discovers that students respond only when she knows their names, stories, and goals. Muriel Summers transformed a failing elementary school by teaching the 7 Habits and declaring every child a leader; her “Leader in Me” model now spans continents. When teachers communicate worth and potential, especially to struggling learners, grades often rise, but the deeper win is confidence and purpose.

Coaching, too, often defaults to shouting, but the best coaches multiply talent. Athletes gravitate to mentors who see more in them than they see in themselves. Bill Walsh’s players said his primary task was persuading them they could be great, and they were. Trust-and-Inspire coaches still impose discipline and chase excellence; the difference is intent, relationship, and the belief that greatness originates in the athlete, not the coach’s ego.



The pattern repeats everywhere. Lawyers, clergy, civic leaders, soldiers: each can manage rules or unleash people. We remember Bishop Myriel of *Les Misérables*, whose single act of mercy rescripted Jean Valjean, who then lifted countless others. Such transition figures change trajectories because they first changed themselves.

Ask: who around me would gain if I trusted and inspired more? See the seed, communicate belief, develop capacity, unleash contribution. Move from managing things to leading people, and your role, whatever it is, becomes a catalyst for unleashed human potential.

