

HERDING TIGERS

WORKBOOK



WELCOME

Leading creative work is unlike any other kind of leadership. You are essentially trying to organize something that doesn't want to be organized. You are stuck in the middle, and have to deal with all of the pressure down from the organization (Make it great now! Be as efficient as possible! Do whatever it takes!) and all of the pressure up (When do I get a promotion? Why didn't you choose *my* idea? Why wasn't I invited to that meeting?), and frankly it's easy to get lost in the fray.

However, for those willing to brave the storm, there is tremendous upside to getting creating leadership right. You get to help your team members be better than they thought possible. You get to produce work that makes clients squeal with glee. And, you get to lay your head down at night knowing that you are building a body of work you can be proud of.

These pages contain questions and exercises to help you apply the concepts in the book *Herding Tigers*. If you are honest with yourself, and diligent in how you approach the work, then my hope is that you will become more of the leader the creative people on your team need you to be.

Be a leader who makes echoes.

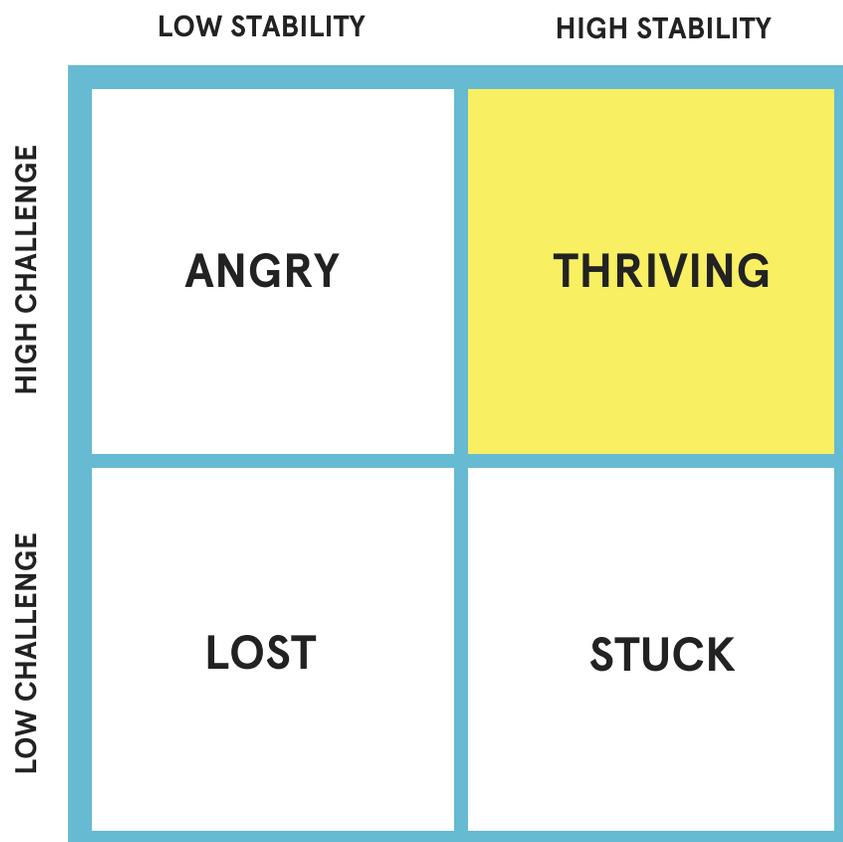


CHAPTER 1: WHAT CREATIVE PEOPLE NEED

"As a leader, there are two key things that creative people need from you more than anything else: **stability** and **challenge**. Stability means that the environment around them is as predictable as it can reasonably be so they can focus their creative instincts on solving the actual problems the work presents instead of wasting them trying to resolve the uncertainty of the work environment. Challenge means that they are given the chance to engage in work that stimulates them, allows them to grow, and instills a sense of personal accomplishment." - p. 18

You are uniquely positioned to dial in both stability *and* challenge for your team, and to ensure that each team member is getting what they need in order to thrive. To do this, you need to keep your finger on the pulse of the team and pay attention to areas where they might be feeling angry, stuck, lost, or bored.

Take a few minutes to consider the matrix below, and where you'd place team members at the present moment. Write their names in the appropriate quadrant. Then, consider which quadrant your overall team is in at the moment.



Now, consider the following questions with regard to stability:

Is there any place in its current work where your team is waiting for *clarity* from you (a decision, more precise direction, etc.) before proceeding? How can you give them more of what they need from you right now?

How can you better protect your team members' finite resources (focus, time, energy) so that they have what they need to be able to do their work?

Now, consider the following questions with regard to challenge:

Is there anyone on your team who is waiting for permission to act, or who is clearly refusing to take creative risks? What would it take for them to feel permission from you?

Who on your team do you need to encourage, coach, or let know that you see their effort and appreciate what they're doing for the team?

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DIRECTION.**

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CHAPTER 2: STOP DOING THE WORK

"This is the critical concept upon which everything else in this book rests. If you persist in doing the tactical work of your team, you are failing it as a leader. When you do the work, the capacity of your team never scales beyond you—you are training your team to defer to you instead of letting it grow into its potential. Once you assume a leadership role, your job performance is no longer measured by your personal accomplishments. Instead, your job is to unleash the creative potential in others." - p. 31

Your job as a leader is not to *do* the work, it's to *lead* it. However, you probably rose through the ranks of the organization as a do-er, so this can be a difficult transition. To lead the work, you need to provide Focus, Function, and Fire for your team. And, you need to establish a dashboard and a scoreboard to help you measure and monitor how your team is doing.

Is there a recurring situation in which you tend to step in and do the work of your team instead of allowing them to make their own decisions? How could you handle it differently?

Do a mental sweep of the past week for times when you shifted into maker mode versus manager mode and consider how it affected the team dynamic.

Action: *Identify one task or piece of work that you've been doing yourself because you're afraid to let go of it. Find someone on the team to take responsibility for it, and get it off your plate.*

Now, consider your scoreboard and dashboard.

Scoreboard:

How are you measuring the success of your team over the coming week? How will you know your team has accomplished its objectives?

Over the coming month or quarter?

Does your team have a clear understanding of how you are measuring success? If not, how can you make the scoreboard public, or make their work more quantifiable?

Dashboard:

What team dynamics should you be monitoring? Have you noticed an increase in behavior that causes you to wonder about the team's degree of focus, health, or commitment to the work?

Action: Schedule ten minutes at the end of this week to consider the past week and identify any out of the ordinary behaviors or patterns that could point to an unhealthy trend.

CHAPTER 3: THEY BROKE IT, YOU BOUGHT IT

"When you try to control bright, talented, creative people, they will eventually seek better horizons, because they'll get tired of running into your overly constrictive ceiling. Instead, effective leaders establish clear principles for how they want the work accomplished, then allow their team members the space they need to work their magic. " - p. 51

Take thirty minutes to write down a list of tenets that provide rails within which your team will operate. At the very least, they should include (a) what kinds of behavior you will celebrate, (b) the rules of team engagement, (c) how you determine priorities in doing the work, and (d) how you determine whether the work is good or bad.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

Action: Consider how you will share your leadership philosophy with the team. Choose one tenet to focus on at first, and look for ways to reinforce it in meetings, when making decisions on projects, or in how you handle and resolve conflict. **The most important aspect of any leadership philosophy is that it is consistently modeled.**

Now, do a quick scan of your principles or leadership philosophy and consider any areas where you or the team might be violating them. Are there any conversations you need to have with team members, or behaviors that you need correct or weed out?

Action: Spend some time considering the marks of good leadership. (For example, from chapter 1: a good leader of creative people accomplishes the objectives while developing the team's ability to shoulder new and more challenging work.) Do you feel like you are accomplishing these right now, or is there an area you need to work on?

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CHAPTER 4: LEVEL UP

"People in a new leadership role are often caught off guard by how much relational dynamics change. Once you are in a position of authority, people will treat you differently, whether consciously or not. They are likely to filter most interactions they have with you through the lens of how it affects their job." - p. 65

Once you are promoted into a leadership role, the dynamics of your relationships on the team change forever. You need to establish a bit of distance from team members so that they can trust you to make objective decisions, and so that you can ensure that you're positioned to have difficult conversations with team members when they need to happen. This doesn't mean that you can't be friends with people on your team, but it does mean that the nature of those friendships needs to change a bit.

Is there any way in which you think you are acting out of a desire to be liked by team members, even though it may compromise your ability to be effective?

Is there a relationship with a team member in which the boundaries are unclear, or where you feel you've failed to establish the right amount of distance?

Action: If you feel that there is a particular relationship where the boundaries are unclear, schedule a time to have a clarifying conversation with that team member. Use the framework on pp. 67-69.

"As the leader of the team, you're holding the loaded gun. Your team recognizes that you have the ability to make its work life either amazing or miserable. If you are not careful with how you wield your authority, you can easily squelch team members' willingness to speak their minds during disagreements or to share ideas that might seem unsafe. This means they might leave their most creative work on the table."

- p. 73

Note a situation, whether a specific team meeting or a one-on-one, when you tend to get defensive when challenged. How does it affect the team, or your leadership? How could you handle the situation differently?

Is there anyplace in your work or leadership where you are compromising your perspective, or "softening your edge" in order to be liked? (p. 71) If so, what can you do about it?

CHAPTER 5: LEAD BRILLIANCE

"Every brilliant creative pro needs a coach to help them unleash their potential. There are a number of things that talented people can do, but there is a limited amount of focus and time in which to do them. And similar to the example above, you must play dual roles for your team members: you must help them become the best they can be individually while also helping them understand and accept their role within the overall team." - p. 79

No matter how talented someone is, they will still suffer from biases that prevent them from seeing things as they really are. This might mean that they are deluded into thinking they are great at something when they're not, or that they're incapable of doing something that they're actually gifted in. This is why even world-class performers seek a coach to help them achieve up to their potential. The members of your team need you to play the role of coach so that they can better understand their individual strengths, weaknesses, and role within the team.

As you consider your team members, who are the builders, the fixers, and the optimizers? (pp. 81-85)

Now, consider each person's workload. How much of what they are tasked with doing is in their "sweet spot", and how much of it is trying to do work they're not naturally wired for? How might you adjust the work (a bit) to allow them at least some work that's in their sweet spot? (p. 84-85)

Now, on a personal level:

Do you feel challenged by your work right now? What might help you increase your sense of challenge and engagement?

Is there any work that you wish you could do but that isn't a part of your normal workload? Why?

Think about a time when you've experienced a great coach. It could be through a sport, activity, or at work. What were the qualities that made that coach special? And, how can you bring those qualities to your team more consistently?

CHAPTER 6: EARN THE RIGHT

"In creative work, everything hinges on trust. You establish a direction and your team pours itself—its time, energy, heart, passion—into the work. They can't always see over the next hill, so you are planting the road signs and giving them a sense of what's ahead. They need to know that their efforts are not in vain, and that you aren't going to suddenly change your mind after they've invested days or weeks of effort. Especially if it's because you either haven't thought it through, or you are bowing to political pressure to save yourself at the expense of the team." - p. 98

Now, we make the shift to thinking about your mechanics. The most fundamental of those mechanics is how you earn and maintain trust. Without it, you cannot lead because your team will not follow. They might do what's necessary to keep their jobs, but they won't take risks on your behalf because they won't believe that you have their best interests in mind. In order to effectively lead creative work, you need to strive to maintain your team's trust through daily actions, big and small.

Is there any situation in which you have made a declarative statement to relieve your team's concerns but that could breach your trust in the long run? (pp. 101-103)

Is there a decision you're currently trying to make that you could invite others into as a way of modeling your thought process and building trust? (p. 105)

One of the ways we earn trust is through telling stories. Take some time to consider the questions below, and think about how you might be able to use story to build trust.

Family and Foundation:

Is there a teacher or a mentor who has taught you something valuable that still serves you to this day?

Was there anything quirky about your family that shaped the way you work or see the world?

Was there a time when someone said something to you that changed your trajectory?

Motivations and Milestones:

Was there a big goal that you set and accomplished? How did it feel, and what did you learn?

Was there a time when you did the right thing, even though it was difficult?

Was there a moment in your life when you took a calculated risk and it paid off? What happened?

Mistakes and Learnings:

Was there a time when you failed in a very public way? What happened, and what did you learn from it?

What is the most embarrassing thing that has happened to you professionally, and how did you recover?

Have you ever had to apologize to someone for something you said or did? What happened, and what did you learn?

CHAPTER 7: PRUNE PROACTIVELY

"Because cultures are grown, you must treat yours like a garden. Just like a good gardener, you aggressively fertilize the aspects of your team's culture that you want in abundance and diligently prune the things you want to get rid of. This requires constant attention on your part, because if you allow a few errant behaviors to slide, you will eventually find your entire garden choked with weeds." - p. 120

With clear ground rules and a stable culture around your team, creative people know they have the support they need to take risks. One of the most valuable things you can do for your team is to regularly prune what doesn't belong, and fertilize what you want to see more of so that your team has the stability it needs to venture into the unknown.

Identify any ghost rules that you think your team might be following. These could be residual rules from a previous leader or organizational rules that you need to prune. (pp. 121-124)

Are there areas where you are tolerating small acts of deviant behavior and are in danger of normalizing it? (pp. 126-130)

Identify one of your principles (from your leadership philosophy) that you're going to focus on this month. How will you reward it when you see it?

What is one way in which you could "lead small" this week? It could be a small act of service to your team, or something you do around the office to show that you're not above doing something others would consider administrative or menial work.

What is one element of your organization's culture that you dislike? Is there a counter-principle that you could instill to help you combat it?

On a personal level, are there any ghost rules that you think you might be following, at the expense of your leadership effectiveness?

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p. 120



CHAPTER 8: STAY ON TARGET

"Focus is an act of bravery. To say yes to one thing, you must say no to many, many others. Saying no doesn't win you many friends within the organization, especially when it means killing off pet projects that are important to your boss's boss. Your job is to parse the fake work (false urgencies, side road problems, busywork) from the real work and help your team channel its focus to solving the problems that actually move things forward. To do this, sharpen your team's sense of focus by clearly and precisely defining the problems it is tasked with solving and establish regular feedback loops to help it stay on target."
- pp. 139-140

Your team has four finite resources to spend on behalf of its work (focus, assets, time, and energy). The most critical of these is focus, because it defines all of the others. How you choose to allocate your team's finite attention determines where, when, and how the work gets done. Your role as a leader is to establish not only what your team should be focusing on, but also what it *shouldn't* be focused on at any given time.

For each of the projects you are currently working on, clearly define the core problems you are solving. List each below, and the core problem.

Now, do a quick scan of the projects above and ensure that there is clear accountability for every outcome you're trying to achieve. Is there a team member for whom you need to better define the core problem, or desired outcome?

Is anyone waiting on you right now in order to make a decision? If so, how can you free them up, whether that means getting them the information they need or giving them permission to take the next step with your full blessing?

Are there any conversations you've had recently that weren't "complete"? In other words, have you walked out of a meeting without a clear resolution? If so, what needs to happen for you to complete that conversation?

What is on your scoreboard today, this week, and this quarter? Is your team aware of it? If not, how might you share it with your team in a public way?

On a personal level:

Are the outcomes you're accountable for clearly defined? If not, how can you get the information you need in order to gain better focus?

CHAPTER 9: DEFEND THEIR SPACE

"Brilliant ideas emerge in the white space. They happen when you and your team are able to step back, spot patterns, and make connections that might otherwise go overlooked because of the overwhelming pressures of the create-on-demand world. However, many teams miss the best ideas because they lack the margin to think deeply about the work and make intuitive leaps and connections. To help your creative team unleash its brilliance, you need to protect its margin. This doesn't mean allowing the team to slack off or intentionally underperform but rather ensuring that your team has the space that it needs to go beyond surface (or first-order) ideas and get to deeper, more valuable thoughts and ideas." - p. 158

You can run the most efficient operation on the planet, and still fail to produce great work. Creative work requires time, attention, and lots of dedicated space. In order to lead your team to brilliance, you need to protect its most valuable resources, and fight to defend them from the ever-growing demands of the organization.

Consider your current meeting schedule. Are there any meetings that exist solely because they once served a purpose, but that are no longer effective in helping you achieve your objectives?

How might you apply the "no fly zone" (pp. 170-171) principle to your team's rhythm?

Think about how your team's time is organized. How could you instill buffers throughout the day to provide some protected, predictable time and energy?

If you could make anything go away right now, what would it be and why?

OK, how can you make it happen? (Or, how can you lessen its effect?)

Action: Look at your upcoming calendar and shift the schedule so that your team has blocks of time for focused work.

On a personal level:

Where can you build buffers in your schedule (and life) in order to protect your energy?

Eliminate something from the calendar or tasks list this month so that you have more time and attention to lead your team. What will you prune?

CHAPTER 10: BE THE MUSE

"The environment that you create for your team is critical to its ability to generate great ideas under pressure and even more critical to ensuring that the best ideas win. Commit to fostering an environment in which team members can share ideas freely, question assumptions, and play with new methods without fear of reprimand." - p. 183

While you cannot (and should not) do the creative thinking for your team, you are uniquely positioned as a leader to help your team stay inspired, and to connect dots that they might not see. Your role is to lead the creative process and to help your team stay inspired and open to possibilities.

Take a look at your calendar for the upcoming month. When will you schedule regular "study" time so that you can absorb new stimulus and share it with your team? Schedule it now.

How could you create a "stimulus library" (p. 190) for your team? What might it look like? Who will be responsible for maintaining it?

How might you encourage team members to share inspiring stimuli and ideas with one another more consistently?

Action: Plan a Stimulus Dive for your team.

1. Identify a problem that your team is trying to solve, or an important project they're working on.
2. Plan a trip (or excursion) to a location that's outside of their normal daily experience.
3. Assign them a problem to focus on while there, and encourage them to work in teams.
4. Separate, and encourage them to use the environment as stimulus to help them solve the problem. What did they notice? How did it make them think of the problem differently?
5. Collect your observations as a team and talk about how you can use them to help you solve the problem.

How do you need to adapt your team's idea process to better account for both the slow twitch, and fast twitch people on your team? (pp. 185-188)

Is there anyone on your team who you'd categorize as a Spark or Scorpion? (pp. 198-201) What needs to change so that they don't disrupt the creative process of your team?

CHAPTER 11: FIGHT WELL

"Although conflict is normal, you shouldn't go seeking it. However, if you've hired properly, it means that you will have a lot of talented people with diverse points of view on your team. This also means that these highly creative people are likely to disagree about the best direction for the work and will have valid reasons for their beliefs. Your job is to encourage dissent and provide an environment in which people can speak their mind, but also to rally everyone around the idea that is best for your stakeholders." - p. 205-206

No one enjoys conflict. (Well, at least not *normal* people.) However, conflict is a natural and expected part of doing creative work. When you have talented people running into each other's ideas and opinions, there is going to be friction. How you handle that conflict as a leader is critical to your team's ability to function.

Are there any conflicts on your team that you've been avoiding rather than seeking to resolve? What will you do to move toward resolving it?

Have you drawn any lines in the sand? (pp. 214-15) If so, why do you think you do it?

Take some time to consider the past few weeks, and your team's behavior and engagement.

Are you seeing any hints of misalignment within the team? If so, where?

Are you noticing any budding relational tension?

Are any new resource constraints creating pressure or tension?

Is there any frustration with organizational direction?

Action: Identify one area where you've been avoiding conflict - it may be in one of the areas listed above - and choose to have a constructive conversation with the team member rather than allowing it to fester. Use the principles on pp. 207-210.

CHAPTER 12: BE A LEADER WORTH FOLLOWING

"Oddly, many leaders cause a lot of harm in their pursuit of great work. They make compromises they would never have seen themselves making a few years prior. They step over people in order to claim just a little more credit than they deserve. They neglect the lives of the people they care most about because they lose perspective. In truth, their pursuit of success eventually reveals what was really important to them all along."
- pp. 223-224

You can accomplish a lot, and look really impressive to the outside world, and still fail in everything that truly matters. You can leave a wake of destruction in your path, and ruin the lives of everyone around you. And, in the end, the world will eventually forget your work as well.

In order to *truly* lead, you must become a leader worth following. This means that you are committed to becoming a person of integrity - aligning your interior and exterior worlds - so that you have a firm foundation on which to stand and a clear framework for making consistent decisions.

When you envision success in your life, what do you see?

Take a few minutes to consider your core values. What framework do you use to make important career and life decisions? (pp. 226-230)

Do you think you are overidentifying with your role? Do you feel the need to protect your turf? If so, why and how? If not, why do you think this isn't a problem for you?

If someone on your team was asked in ten years about the biggest impact you've had on their life, what would you want them to say?

Who do you consider to be on your council of advisers? (pp. 231-233) How often do you consult them? Is it the right amount, or do you think you should do so more often?

BE A LEADER WHO MAKES ECHOES.

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