

PEOPLE360: A BLUEPRINT TO BUILD A PEOPLE-FIRST ORGANIZATION

Who's coaching the coaches?

This question is one of the many that inspired this book. While I believe experience can be a great teacher (as many of my anecdotes to this point have illustrated), I also believe that there should be a “go-to” playbook for how to lead and develop talent.

In comes *The Power of Playing Offense*, where the endgame is to level up our leadership and be the best version of ourselves so that we can maximize impact in our workplace, community, home, and beyond.

MY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY AND OFFER TO YOU

Until my most recent years, I was largely self-trained in leadership. Here's how my journey has evolved:

BUSINESS UNDERGRAD: Fundamentally theoretical, sans leadership courses.

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR ROLES: I heard “Worry about it once you get there.”

BREAKING INTO FORMAL LEADERSHIP RANKS: The message became “You’ll figure it out” or “Learn from those around you—whether what to do, or what *not* to do.”

MID-SPORTS CAREER LEADERSHIP RANKS: Leadership development finally came! Between two to five formal training days per year.

LATE-SPORTS CAREER LEADERSHIP RANKS: Same as mid-career.

EXECUTIVE MBA: Twenty-one-month crash course with leadership development interspersed.

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE: Two years of daily immersion where I learned more about leadership than during all of the above combined.

BUSINESS OWNERSHIP: Everything I coach, I implement and validate on myself/my business first. It's the best course on leadership (and self-leadership) I've ever had.

LIFELONG COMMITMENT: I study leadership several hours per day. It's non-negotiable.

This chapter was written so that you don't have to wait as long as I did. I have minimal control over most university curriculums and can only influence leadership development programs within organizations I directly touch; that equation

doesn't scale well enough to achieve a vision of impacting one million people, lives, and leaders by the year 2030.

This book is a key to maximize that impact. The learnings continue at WWW.POWEROFPLAYINGOFFENSE.COM.

Consider me a virtual coach for now—and of course, I'm always happy to have the conversation to meet at the 50 in person, however I can support you and your organization.

For now, let's roll up our sleeves and get to work.

“The business of business is people.”

HERB KELLEHER

co-founder, former CEO, Southwest Airlines

PEOPLE360: A TRANSFORMATIONAL CYCLE

This blueprint is a compilation of *best practices* from organizations I have worked in, teams I have led, and client organizations that have served as great partners and case studies of mine. These *best practices* will include a mix of activities, exercises, methods, models, mindset shifts, frameworks, processes, and programs.

The blueprint is organized in a 360-degree cyclical fashion, where one element feeds into the next, from recruiting through retention (then back to recruiting). If the goal is to attract stars and keep stars, you'll entice new stars when you take care of your current ones. It's a cycle that keeps on giving.



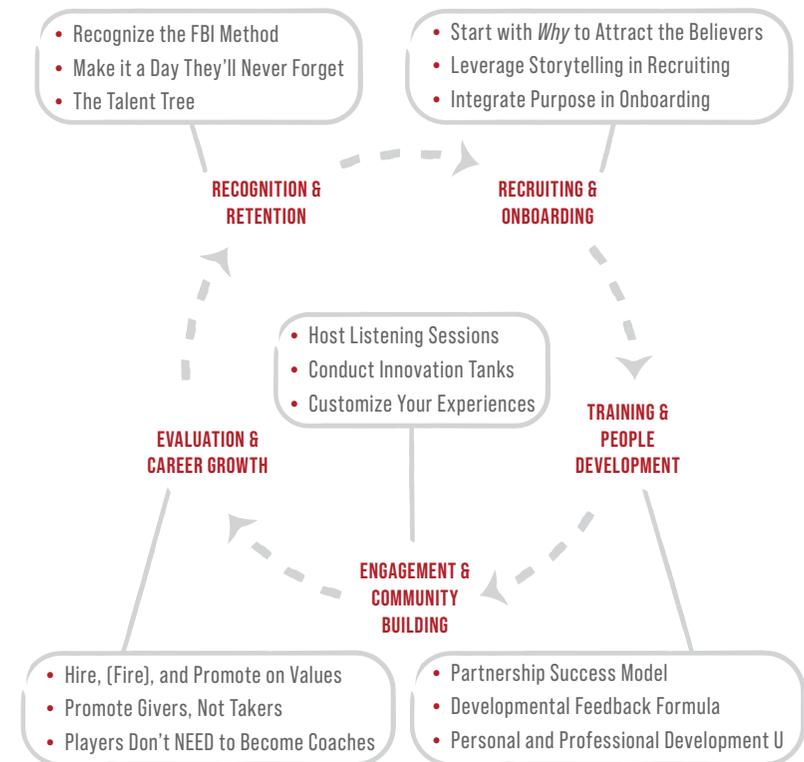
People360 Blueprint. © 2020. *The Power of Playing Offense*, Paul Epstein.

Why are these five elements so important? Because each has unique impact—and most of it is left unfulfilled, never materializing due to gaps in our current

people processes and systems. This blueprint is your way of overcoming these challenges in your team and organization.

For each element of the five-part cyclical blueprint, here's what to expect after a brief introduction:

- State of the Union—comprised of research, ROI, and more.
- Three actionable ways to install this phase of the People360 blueprint—as you see in the model below.



People360 Blueprint. © 2020. *The Power of Playing Offense*, Paul Epstein.

If you'd like to keep this People360 Blueprint handy, download or print it from WWW.POWEROFPLAYINGOFFENSE.COM.

RECRUITMENT & ONBOARDING

Talent wins games. The right talent wins championships.

This is as much about attracting the best talent in the marketplace as it is about selecting the right fit to enrich your locker room and ignite every person's superpowers—from star quarterbacks to long snappers.

The first side of the coin is recruiting.

Candidly, are the candidates you desire most interested in you?

Recruiting can be brutally competitive and word in the war for talent travels fast. With resources like Glassdoor, social media, and word of mouth via networks, candidates will know what you're all about in a few clicks of the mouse. The suggested practices below will help create the needed positive water cooler buzz about your organization beyond its four walls—so the *right talent* can find your tribe.

Once they're in, the fun begins. Everybody enjoys the *honeymoon period*—but honeymoons inevitably end. How can you welcome in the talent that you competed so hard to recruit, and ensure that they feel embraced, inspired, and energized, so that when they get past the honeymoon period, they are ready to authentically contribute with all their effort?

Treat them right from day one.

STATE OF THE UNION: RECRUITING & ONBOARDING

Top candidates **STAY AVAILABLE FOR JUST 10 days** before getting hired.²²

48%
of businesses say
their top quality hires
COME FROM EMPLOYEE REFERRALS.²⁴

Organizations that invest
in employer branding are
3x
MORE LIKELY TO MAKE
A QUALITY HIRE.²³

33%
of employees **KNEW WHETHER THEY**
WOULD STAY WITH THEIR COMPANY
LONG-TERM AFTER THEIR FIRST WEEK.²⁵

33%
of new hires **QUIT**
THEIR JOB AFTER
SIX MONTHS.²⁶

69%
of employees are more
likely to **STAY WITH A**
COMPANY FOR THREE YEARS
IF THEY EXPERIENCED
GREAT ONBOARDING,

**yet
only**

12%
of employees strongly
agree that their
organization **DOES A**
GREAT JOB OF ONBOARDING.²⁷

START WITH WHY TO ATTRACT THE BELIEVERS

The choice is yours. If you want the same candidates you're already getting, keep posting a paragraph about your company, then a dozen or so bullets about the position and job requirements.

Alternatively, you could start with *why*. Why does your company exist? Why do you serve? What is your collective purpose? What cause do you stand for? What are the beliefs you share?

Do that, and you will hire the *believers*.

Your purpose and vision cast an inspirational message to the like-minded and like-hearted believers in the marketplace. They embody who you will collectively be as an organization once they join. It's easy to hire for the blue skies; hire the people that will stick with you through the storm. As believers, they joined you for the duration of the journey, not just the destination.

“If you hire people just because they can do a job, they’ll work for your money. But if you hire people who believe what you believe, they’ll work for you with blood and sweat and tears.”

SIMON SINEK

author of *Start with Why*

LEVERAGE STORYTELLING IN RECRUITING

Once you hire the believers, you'll start to see the superpowers shared in the last chapter come to life. Strengths, talents, and passions will emerge in abundance. Also remember that *every seat has a story*. Capture the stories of your people on their best days, about how they are able to express their superpowers, how they feel a part of something bigger than themselves, what the organization means to them, and how the organization has provided for them.

Capture it all in print and video if possible. Work with your marketing and communications teams to bring it to life, then evolve it and let it be a staple for

how you communicate to the outside world. Your people are your greatest gifts and recruiting tools. They will feel more invested in the locker room when they're helping to fill it with fellow members of their tribe. As for candidates, people buy people. Make sure to always keep your most inspiring and authentic stories out there for the world to see.

We will dive deeper on the power of storytelling in Chapter 10.

INTEGRATE PURPOSE IN ONBOARDING

Just as we did in the 49ers Academy, at the culmination of your formal onboarding (which likely consists of functional and technical training, FAQs, and welcoming activities), end the process off-site. Carve out a half day and lead your new hires through an exercise or two from Applying the Playbook in our first pillar, Live with Championship Purpose. A four-hour investment of time expresses the purpose and care needed at this foundational stage. If you'd like to learn more about facilitating a Purpose discovery as a part of your onboarding process, please see the Purpose Discovery FAQ at WWW.POWEROFPLAYINGOFFENSE.COM.

TRAINING & PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Your locker room is inspired. They feel purpose, believe in the vision, serve as proud ambassadors, and are ALL IN on the mission. Now, how do they level up?

One of the key drivers of retention is the feeling that you're getting better each and every day—personally and professionally. When you know the organization is wholly invested in you, it creates a bond and social contract that you can't put a price tag on.

Most organizations have training programs. They invest in the advancement of skill, function, and execution of the daily tasks in the hopes of mastery within their best talent. I'm going to leave that side of the training equation to the experts in your field—you. What we're going to talk about is people and leadership development. You know—the other side of business. The side that probably attracted you to this book.

Do what other organizations won't if you want to develop the people they can't.

STATE OF THE UNION: TRAINING & PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT



PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS MODEL

Commit to each and every one of your employees that they will leave better than when they arrived. This is your version of my Clippers Constitution from Chapter 5. Cocreate what the core controllables are with your team (e.g., work ethic, positive attitude, being coachable). That's their end of the bargain. In exchange, you will commit to their personal and professional growth—holistically. This starts by creating a custom training and development plan for each individual.

If they give you the controllables, you commit to delivering the training. Now there's skin in the game on both sides, and nobody (on your team) will be able to say that they weren't leveling up if they did the foundational things that were expected—which should be table stakes for the job regardless. This is your partnership success model.

DEVELOPMENTAL FEEDBACK FORMULA

S-B-I-N (in this order):

S—situation

B—behavior

I—impact

N—next

This is the formula for delivering constructive feedback so that your people can develop, and they are inspired toward better action. As much as I've been guilty of sugarcoating and compliment sandwiches, I realize that people need to hear what they need to hear (not what they want to hear)—me included. For more on the topic of what researcher Kim Scott coined “radical candor,” refer to her phenomenal book by that name.

From Kim's model, radical candor happens at the intersection of caring personally and challenging directly. This intersection is where feedback is best received, and thus increases the potential of positive change as the outcome.

The key question you first need to answer is whether you have a foundational relationship where your team member knows it's coming from a good place. If not, start there before you pull out the battering ram.

If you have the relationship equity established, proceed with this feedback formula:

S—What is the situation? Be specific on occasion and frequency.

B—What is the behavior? Notice I didn't say judgment. A behavior is “you're late to work.” A judgment is “you're lazy” (your perception of them because

they're constantly late to work). To avoid unnecessary arguments and personal attacks, keep it to the black and white behaviors—not judgments.

I—What is the impact of your behavior? (Financial, relational, team, trust, time, morale, etc.)

N—What actions can we co-create so that we don't end up addressing this same behavior in the future?

Here's what this could look like:

"Johnny, every Monday morning (situation) you're coming in late to work (behavior). Our team is starting to lose trust (impact) in whether we can rely on you for some of these early week deliverables. I personally want to see you have the best possible brand inside our team and the company. This is small for now, but small things add up, and I wouldn't want your growth to be hurt in the long run because of these minor and controllable things. What can we do to avoid you being late to work in the future?"

As a coach, this is your "go-to" formula when delivering developmental feedback. Stick to it. Your team will undoubtedly develop—and trust will inevitably be built.



TIME-OUT: Before your next round of conducting one-on-ones, carve some time out on your calendar to craft these messages in advance so that you are prepared to deliver this developmental feedback formula as needed.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT U

From my days at the 49ers, we started "49ers U." This was a multimonth, university-style speaker series that featured guest presenters (typically executives

and department heads) to share insights unique to their space. This spanned contract negotiations and managing the salary cap and player analytics, along with a plethora of business topics.

While you may not have the sports industry at your fingertips, you have the same opportunity.

I propose that every organization create a *Personal and Professional Development U*. Create a monthly thought leadership series of internal and external experts to train and speak on themes such as leadership, team building, culture, emotional intelligence, mindset, purpose, resilience, managing conflict, success, and personal growth—the list is exponential.

Separate from core job topics, how can you develop the people side of your business? This will help groom and build the leaders of today and tomorrow. Think of it as *Leadership U*. Whether you call it that or not, you're creating leaders inside the office (no title required) and beyond.

Cherry on top, by promoting a learning program, it will organically create internal teaching opportunities—and as we've often heard, the best way to learn is to teach. The content of the U can be taught in each and every department and team, further expanding and sustaining the learning capacity of your organization beyond the U.

ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY BUILDING

You've taken your talent, people, and leadership to the next level—that's HUGE.

Now, how do we keep them engaged in between these high-mark points? Ultimately, the day-to-day experience will own their mind space. It will be the factor of work that will influence how they feel on the drive in *and* the drive home, what they say at the dinner table and at happy hour.

Better yet, if you build a strong enough community, they may choose to spend some of this social time with each other, where there isn't a barrier between personal and professional. It makes people sense and makes business sense as the research by Gallup shows that having a best friend at work increases the overall engagement, retention, trust, innovation, and performance of the organization.

An engaged community is one that wants to do the work—they don't need to be told to do the work. It isn't the carrots and sticks that drive them, it's the authentic belief in what they do, why they do it, whom they do it for, and whom they do it with.

The endgame: Gone are the days of silos. In are the days of connection and communication, where you'll have a thriving community of happy, productive, and engaged employees.

STATE OF THE UNION: ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY BUILDING

**\$550
billion**

IN LOST PRODUCTIVITY EVERY YEAR DUE TO DISENGAGED EMPLOYEES.
But let's call these employees what they really are: people who have quit without actually quitting.³³

54% of employees say
A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY
(great coworkers, celebrating milestones, a common mission)
KEPT THEM AT A COMPANY LONGER.³⁵

53% of Americans are
CURRENTLY UNHAPPY AT WORK –
costing American businesses
over \$300 billion per year.³⁴

50%
of the **POSITIVE CHANGES**
IN COMMUNICATION PATTERNS
WITHIN THE WORKPLACE can
be accredited to social
interaction outside of the
workplace.³⁶

Companies and
organizations that
COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY ARE
4.5x
MORE LIKELY TO RETAIN THE
BEST EMPLOYEES.³⁷

HOST LISTENING SESSIONS

Similar to the 49ers lunch box story in Chapter 7, listen to those closest to the work. By asking what's going well and what could be better, you will unearth change in three forms:

Do More—Do Better—Do Different

In response to what is going well, now you're aware of it! Do *more* of those things.

In response to what could be better, you now know what needs course correction—whether it can be slightly *better* or should be completely *different*.

Your people will feel heard, they will have a platform to speak truth to power, and you will have the opportunity to act so that people feel like their voices matter and can make a difference in their daily environment. You never know where the lunch box example may be hiding in your team or organization—until you ask.



TIME-OUT: Identify one thing you will do more, one thing you will do better, and one thing you will do different. Jot each down. Now, let's loop the team in and create some positive change together.

Identify a date roughly ninety days out where you can carve out a half day (or full day) off-site for your team. In between now and then, see the appendix for a guide on how to best facilitate your first listening session (including tips and framing so it doesn't turn into a vent session). You'll be amazed at how much you'll learn about what really matters to your team. After you learn what you can collectively do more/better/different, raise a glass and celebrate the off-site. When back in the office, it's time to put it in action.

The timing of ninety days is strategic. By then I anticipate you will have finished the book and can now customize an entire half or full day *Playing Offense* experience for your team. The listening sessions will take roughly two hours, the rest of the agenda is a blank canvas. For off-site agenda ideas, I'd recommend a selection of your favorite Applying the Playbook and/or Time Out exercises; there are dozens to choose from, and all are highlighted in the appendix. Select a few that will resonate with your team and get planning!

CONDUCT INNOVATION TANKS

We typically think of innovation as a grand idea—something groundbreaking that is *Shark Tank*-worthy. To achieve these innovative and progressive outcomes, it is less about the size of the idea, and more about the process to get there. This is not a story about the emperor in an ivory tower; rather, it is about the village coming together so that everybody's fingerprints are on the blueprint.

Innovation tanks are opt-in working sessions with a blank canvas to brainstorm about the future of the business. It can focus on a system, a process, a product, a strategy. Ideally, you have a master facilitator who can manage the flow, interactivity, organization, and advancement of the conversation. There should be a mix of people by department, tenure, and ideology. At your next all-hands, present the top idea from each innovation tank to recognize who inspired it and create a *pull strategy* for participation in the next tank.

Whether a listening session or an innovation tank, these are only two (of many) examples on how you can engage and value your team, give their voices a platform, recognize courageous and bold ideas, and create an inclusive culture of belonging, contribution, and impact.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR EXPERIENCES

Believe it or not, not everybody wants a ping pong table in the office!

After working in Silicon Valley for years, I can endorse this theory to be true. While certain benefits or experiences can create a “we want it, too” movement, they typically will fade as soon as the next fad hits.

We've all heard the saying “give the people what they want.” While fair in spirit, the challenge is we all want different things. Your yoga retreat is somebody else's jelly of the month club.

There's only one solution to the problem: the power of customization. Create a diverse menu of options, even poll your employees for what should be on the menu—THEN people will truly get what they want.

Your team members will choose the experience and incentives that matter most to them. Some will elect flexibility to work from home once a week. Others will elect health and wellness benefits. Others may actually want the ping-pong table!

There is no right, there is no wrong; empower your team to make these small elections, and watch their engagement take off.

Lastly, keep the community in mind when crafting your benefits. Fun and social gatherings should be a must. Your next one might even be where you announce these new perks.

PS—While I'm a massive fan of customizing experiences and incentives, even more important is the daily work environment and opportunity for growth. That's the greatest motivator of them all—even beyond financial rewards, as research from McKinsey & Company has shown: “Praise, attention from leaders, and opportunities to lead projects are more effective motivators than performance-based cash rewards.”³⁸

EVALUATION & CAREER GROWTH

Now comes the moment of truth. We've provided inspiration, purpose, opportunities for contribution and impact, personal and professional development, and a seat at the table.

As coaches, we get paid to make tough decisions and have tough conversations. People's careers are in our hands. There's an extraordinary responsibility in that.

So, how are we grooming and molding our leaders of tomorrow? What is expected of them? Do they know what winning and success look like on a daily basis? How are we keeping score along the way? What are the factors for how we evaluate *and* what we evaluate?

If we're going to dangle the carrot of formal career growth, there should be no surprises when sitting on the other side of the table. These practices to follow will help create a transparent and consistent platform to create, build, and grow a locker room you're proud of.

STATE OF THE UNION: EVALUATION & CAREER GROWTH

76%

of employees **PLACE CAREER GROWTH AS A TOP PRIORITY** and key determining factor in staying at company³⁹

WHEN ASKED IF THEIR COMPANY MAKES IT EASY AND TRANSPARENT TO UNDERSTAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION,

26%

say “not at all” or “hardly ever” and another

27%

say “only from time to time.”⁴¹

17%

Only **17%** of employees say their **MANAGERS ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THEIR CAREER DEVELOPMENT.**⁴⁰

3/4

say they **WOULD STAY WITH THEIR CURRENT EMPLOYER IF THEY KNEW THEY HAD A CAREER PATH.**⁴²

2/3

of **MANAGERS FAIL TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN THEIR OWN CAREER DEVELOPMENT.**⁴³

HIRE, (FIRE), AND PROMOTE ON VALUES

Hiring is the easy part: Promote your organizational values externally, and watch the attraction begin.

Firing is where it can get messy. Often, it’s because performance clouds our lens. Superstars typically survive. Middle-of-the-pack performers with strong values and intangibles are a coin flip. I’m not denying the natural temptation of this gray space; however, you *cannot* be a values-driven organization if it’s *not* the governing lens for your actions, behaviors, and decisions.

Lastly, promotions. As you conduct evaluations that lead up to these career growth conversations, are you reviewing more than KPIs and metrics? Are values factored in?

If not, today is an opportunity to start. Until others in your organization see that values are, the driver of how you hire, fire, and promote, they’re just words on the wall. Once values are activated within your organizational DNA, then consistently practiced and embedded over time, you will be able to proudly say that you are a values-based organization. Then, never look back.

“We believe that it’s really important to come up with core values that you can commit to. And by commit, we mean that you’re willing to hire and fire based on them. If you’re willing to do that, then you’re well on your way to building a company culture that is in line with the brand you want to build.”

TONY HSIEH
CEO, Zappos

PROMOTE GIVERS, NOT TAKERS

All around us, there are people who *take* at every opportunity. You know exactly who I'm talking about.

There are others that *give*, fully generous, no agenda, and don't "keep score."

This leads to a divergence in culture: one side built around scarcity—the other built around abundance.

If you want to continue to fight for perceived finite resources, including time, money, and information, skip to the next section. If you want to create an environment where you shift from "I don't have the time" to "I'll make the time," from budgeting considerations being holistic versus siloed, and where information is shared versus hoarded, then recognize this giving philosophy as a core message in your organization.

A simple way to embed this is in your performance evaluations, especially at the leadership level. If a leader's contributions are 100 percent inside their department, that's a sign of prioritizing "taking" over "giving." Takers don't get promoted. Those who get promoted are the givers—those who create value for the organization beyond the four walls of their team and their department.

Once implemented, this practice can transform the value created from within your organization overnight, from scarcity to abundance. Giving will lead to willing reciprocity. The virtuous cycle takes over from there.

PLAYERS DON'T NEED TO BECOME COACHES

The best players rarely become the best coaches. But in business, that's exactly what we do. We default to promoting the highest achieving "doer" to supervise or manage the *doers* of that space. We're not shocked by the role-player in sports who becomes a legendary coach (see, for example, Steve Kerr, Golden State Warriors championship coach, Chicago Bulls role player), but rarely give the same *look* to businesspeople who are non-stars. In sports, coaching is a different skill set from playing, and we acknowledge that fact. Yet in business, players become coaches overnight for being the top scorer (i.e., producer), regardless of a known ability to lead.

It all comes back full circle to Personal and Professional Development U, a.k.a. Leadership U. If it is implemented, you now have a platform to develop high-potential team members into future leaders—to train them on model leadership behaviors versus pure focus on functional and technical expertise.

After the university launch, embed a *leadership behavior evaluation* across your organization for every employee that aspires to be in the formal leadership ranks. This behavioral scorecard can be used for existing leaders as well. After all, they're the ones conducting the reviews!

You've now embedded leadership DNA into the fabric of your organization. Here are some eye-opening stats to highlight the importance of maintaining a focus on developing your leaders and yourself. There's very little traffic on that road.

STATE OF THE UNION: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

ONLY **62%** OF
EMPLOYERS HAVE A LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN PLACE
for their new managers.

38% do not.⁴⁴

58%
of MANAGERS SAID
THEY DIDN'T RECEIVE
ANY MANAGEMENT
TRAINING.⁴⁵

The **TOP 2 REASONS**
PEOPLE GET PROMOTED ARE UTTERLY UNRELATED
TO THEIR TALENT FOR MANAGING PEOPLE:

- 1) because they were successful in a previous role, and
- 2) because they have a lot of tenure or experience.⁴⁶

RECOGNITION & RETENTION

Homestretch. People know where they stand and what's in it for them.

Now it's time to shine a light on the bright spots within your team and organization. Let everybody know they matter, especially the long snappers. It's your opportunity to make them feel special and provide moments and memories that will last a lifetime.

Speaking of lifetime, it's time to start thinking about how you want to be remembered. When all is said and done, will you leave everything and everybody you impact better than you found them? Will you pay it forward to inspire the next wave? You will never know when somebody has their own breakthrough, but you invest in their potential regardless. When you take care of people in this fashion, word travels fast.

Back to our introduction of the 360 cycle. What's your *keeper* strategy? If the goal is to attract stars and keep stars, you'll entice new stars when you take care of your current ones. It's a cycle that keeps on giving.

“Appreciate everything your associates do for the business. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They're absolutely free and worth a fortune.”

SAM WALTON

founder of Walmart and Sam's Club

STATE OF THE UNION: RECOGNITION & RETENTION

The
#1 REASON

PEOPLE LEAVE THEIR JOB

is that they don't
feel appreciated.⁴⁷

65%

of Americans reported
RECEIVING ZERO RECOGNITION
for good work in the last year.⁴⁸

51%

of **MANAGERS SAY THEY DO A GOOD
JOB OF RECOGNIZING A JOB WELL**

DONE, yet only

17%

of employees from the same
companies in the study say that
their managers recognize them
for a job well done.⁴⁹

The **ORGANIZATIONAL COSTS OF
EMPLOYEE TURNOVER** are
estimated to range between

100%
and
300%

of the replaced
employee's salary.⁵⁰

Managers who give frequent
recognition and genuine
encouragement see a

40%

INCREASE IN PRODUCTIVITY.⁵¹

More than
80%

of employees say they're
MOTIVATED TO WORK HARDER
WHEN THEIR BOSS SHOWS
APPRECIATION for their work.⁵²

RECOGNIZE THE FBI METHOD

It's time to catch somebody doing something right. Similar to developmental feedback, there's a formula for affirmative (positive) feedback, a.k.a. recognition: **F-B-I**. While I hope you never get interrogated by them, do use the formula.

F—feeling **B**—behavior **I**—impact

Unlike the developmental feedback formula, these elements can be used in any order; I-B-F works just as well. The key here is to not forget the F (*feeling*). That is the secret sauce.

Most recognition messages are crafted solely around the behavior. Fewer recognize the impact of the behavior. Few say what it actually means to them, their feeling. As an example:

“Susie, thank you for staying late last night to craft our presentation (behavior). Because of you, we were so well prepared for the client meeting today that they signed on the spot (impact). We’re so thankful to have you on the team, and you continue to inspire us (feeling) to do our part because we trust that you will always overdeliver on yours.”

A few tips as you're crafting your next recognition message: It's easy for many of us to recognize achievement. Some of us acknowledge the process, but it's important to do so regardless of the results (as this example with Susie highlights). If she did everything in her power to achieve the desired result and we didn't land the client, we should still recognize her efforts. Most importantly, recognize the behaviors you want to see if you want to see them more often—and recognize the values you want to see if you want them to stick.

Bonus: kick each team meeting off by catching somebody doing something right. Simply ask, “Who caught somebody doing something right?” and watch the recognition flood in. We did this at the Clippers, and it worked wonders. Your turn.

MAKE IT A DAY THEY'LL NEVER FORGET

Short, simple, and sweet. For the most significant recognitions of the year, (confidentially) invite their immediate family. Make it a surprise—this part is key! When the presenter is concluding their remarks, ask their family to join them as a grand reveal. The more difficult the logistics of getting their family there, the more impactful it will be.

Make sure to have some tissues nearby!

THE TALENT TREE

If you want to retain the best, you'll have to take care of your best. Extrinsic motivators like money and titles will only get you so far. It works in the immediate, and then there's another benchmark set out to achieve.

What has the potential to last is your genuine commitment to growing people. When you have their best interests at heart, you look after them personally and professionally. You inspire their best. You believe in them wholeheartedly. You elevate their potential beyond levels they knew they had in them.

The end result is authentic service, commitment, and dedication in return. This will often lead to increased production and performance, which naturally increase the probabilities of formal growth opportunities. If internal, you're always a happy camper. If external, there can be mixed feelings. You can shun it, or you can applaud it—just like my boss at the Kings did.

A true leader should be measured by more than the score on the board. They should be measured by whom they have grown along the way. Think of it as a *talent tree*.

Who has worked for you, in your span of care, that has now grown to greener pastures? In this upcoming exercise in Applying the Playbook, you'll put pen to paper on this question.

This selfless approach to doing what's best for your people—even if it stings your team and organization in the short run—is the sign of what makes a great leader. Just like you would never want to be held back, let those around you fly as well—and never clip their wings. This will become your ultimate legacy as a leader.

Now let's go draw that tree!

APPLYING THE PLAYBOOK

CHAPTER 9: YOUR TALENT TREE

“Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.”

WARREN BUFFETT

investor, philanthropist, CEO, Berkshire Hathaway

What do you want your leadership legacy to be? What’s the story you will be able to tell when you hang your cleats at the end of a long, hard-fought career? How will you be remembered?

No doubt we all want to achieve business results—otherwise, career growth would be scarce. That said, I’d like to expand our view on what success and impact look like for a leader. Is it only about the trophies and hitting metrics? Or will it be the people that we’ve impacted along the way? The people that are now positional leaders in their own right, paving their own path, grateful that we played a part in their growth and development along their journey.

If you envision your legacy and leadership brand being both results and people you’ve grown, this exercise is for you. I trust you’ll handle the results. Let’s tackle the other side by playing offense and filling out your talent tree.

NOTE: *This exercise assumes you are in a positional leadership role. If not, all good—can’t wait for you to get there. Absorb the spirit of the exercise, and use it as a motivator for your leadership brand and legacy when you are formally leading a team in the near future.*

STEP ONE

Identify all the people that you have promoted over the course of your career. It can be internal or external. If it’s a short list, no worries—this is a career-long exercise going forward.

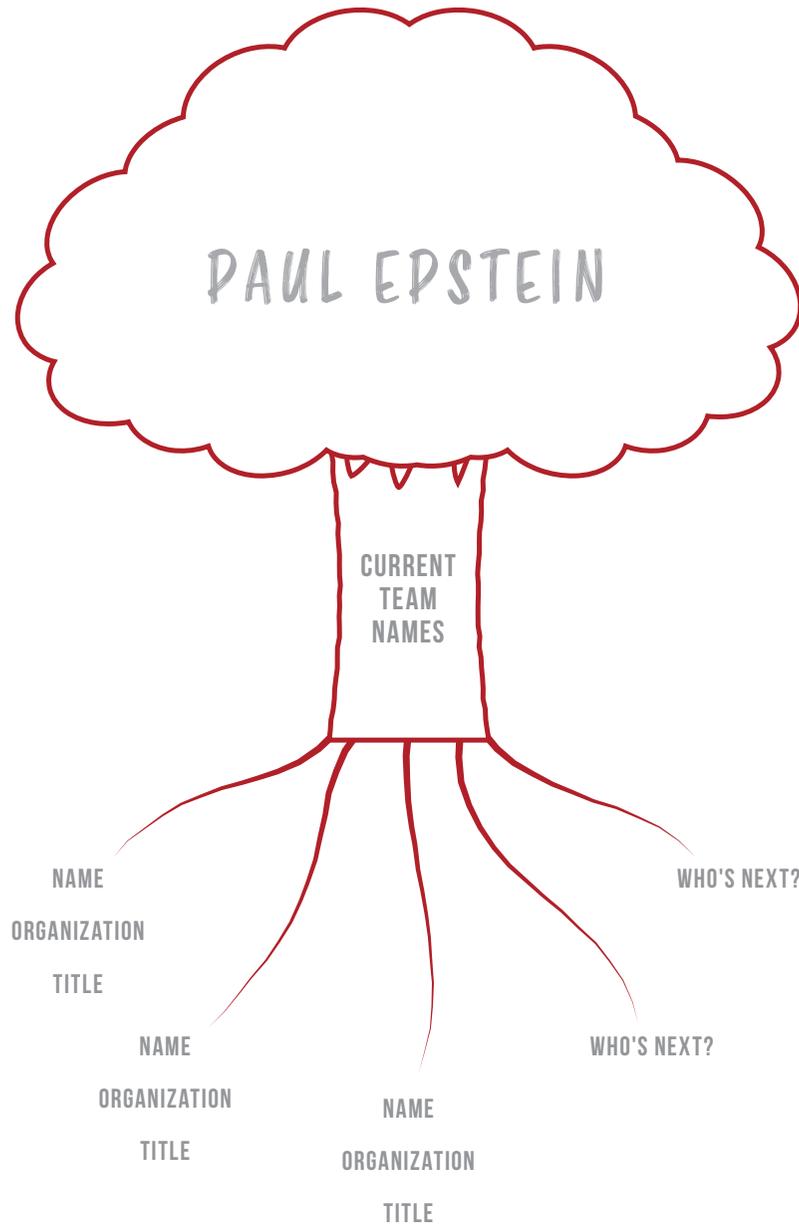
Make a list with their name and where they were promoted to (organization/position). This information will be used in the next step.

STEP TWO

Draw a tree that resembles the one on the following page with the below information (just like in a real tree, all parts are connected and rely on one another for growth and support):

- Your name in the top of the tree
- Names of your current team members in the trunk
- Names of your past promotions in the roots (one person per root)—include their name, organization, and position
- Strategically draw a few roots with no information next to them. Consider these motivational placeholders as this information will be updated in real time going forward. The only question is “Who’s next?”

YOUR TALENT TREE



The list below is what initially inspired me to start a talent tree of my own.

While not in the exact same format, this career growth chart is what we used at Legends and the 49ers to showcase all of our people growth within the sports industry. This, as much as the billion-dollar revenue target (which was achieved), became a sign of the project's success. What makes business sense, makes people sense. The same can apply anywhere.

LEGENDS CAREER GROWTH
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS PROJECT

VICE PRESIDENTS / GENERAL MANAGERS		MANAGERS	
ELEVATE			
DIRECTORS			

You don't need to see their names to see that we were proud of our impact at the 49ers as our people elevated through the sports industry.

It's time to use your tree for future inspiration, impact, and gratitude.

- The **INSPIRATION** is creating your leadership brand and building a legacy you're proud of.
- The **IMPACT** is the way you will touch the lives of everybody on your tree. Every day, you have the ability to impact the lives of each name in the trunk of your talent tree (your current team). You have already made a major impact in the lives of each person in the roots of your talent tree.

- The **GRATITUDE** is a way for you to stay connected to every person within your tree (especially the ones you don't see every day), to simply say, "thank you" and "I wouldn't be where I am without you." Share this exercise with them and encourage them to draw a talent tree of their own.

Keep your tree visible as a daily reminder that this is what matters. Your legacy and how you will be remembered are a direct reflection of the lives you've touched and the careers you've grown. People may forget a trophy, but they'll never forget who took care of them along the way.