

CREATIVES TALK EXPERIENCE

12 Transforming Discussions
For Developing Successful and Creative Leaders.

By Eric H. Brown
Author of Creatives Lead©

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Before You Begin

I love it when creatives get together. I love the ideas, energy, and synergy that come out of creative conversations. Creatives are natural problem solvers. Because creatives view the world a little differently, they naturally connect ideas and want to solve challenging issues. Ideas come from everywhere, every experience, and every conversation. Learning from the unique experiences of others and creating experiences where intentional ideation and inspiration thrive are why I wrote this book.

Welcome to *Creatives Talk Experience*©. This resource was created at the request of leaders, mentors, and coaches like you. It doesn't matter if you are a seasoned or a new leader, this resource was designed with you in mind.

As you read this, I am making several assumptions about you:

- I assume you are a leader who wants to grow the leaders around you.
- You are part of a business book club and want to discuss the strategies you are learning with other leaders.
- You are using *Creatives Lead*© resources for training, equipping, or coaching new and upcoming leaders in your organization.
- You have read (or are reading) my book, *Creatives Lead*©, and want to discuss what you are learning.
- You have asked your team to read *Creatives Lead*© because you will be facilitating discussions or will be coaching around the strategies from the book.
- Or, you are a leader who cares about people, and you want to provide new leaders with a framework to transition confidently into their new roles.

Do any of those assumptions resonate with you? If so, *Creatives Talk Experience*® is for you.

I have found we all learn faster when engaged over a concentrated period of time, on a topic of mutual interest, using a structured framework. I have also discovered, from leaders I admire, the value of asking good questions. A timely, well-asked question is a valuable asset in every creative leader's toolbox.

How to Use This Book

In this book, you will hear from other creative leaders in a variety of industries, as they talk about their real-world experiences. You will also be creating an *experience* as you and other creatives schedule time to talk.

This book builds on the topics and strategies within *Creatives Lead*®. If you have not read that book, I recommend picking up a copy. However, don't be discouraged if you have not read *Creatives Lead*®. While each *Creatives Talk Experience*® discussion corresponds with content from *Creatives Lead*®, you can still use *Creatives Talk Experience*® for engaging in conversations with your team. Make the content your own as you learn from, and guide, your new and potential leaders through each topic.

The topics come from a flexible and adaptable four-quadrant model—a model that fits all kinds of organizations. Teams do not evolve and grow in a linear fashion, but they utilize quadrants of the model at various times. While the quadrants act in unison, some areas can expand or contract depending on what the need is for the team at any given moment. I call this the *B.E.S.T. Team*® model. The *B.E.S.T. Team*® model complements both people and work while also impacting leadership and teamwork. The four quadrants are:

- Building
- Engaging
- Strengthening
- Thriving

Previous research, such as Tuckman's stages of group development, saw teams as stable, specialized, siloed, and long-term. In our current leadership landscape, teams are fluid. They're self organizing. They're cross-disciplined. They're temporary. They're organic. We need a model that's going to be adaptable and one that's going to be human. I use the acronym *BEST* to help you remember the model because I know you desire the *best* for yourself and the team.

What role will you be assuming for the discussions ahead? Will you be the seasoned leader building up new leaders around you, or are you the new leader in a new role with a new team? Will you be mentoring another creative or junior practitioner, or are you in a coaching role? To get the most out of this book, read the role that best describes you below.

For Seasoned Leaders

As a mature leader, you are likely building up leaders around you. *Creatives Talk Experience*® is one of the best ways to start them down the right path. This book will provide you with needed material to engage in open and transformative dialog with your growing leaders. Use the book to openly discuss leadership themes, strategies, and execution. The *B.E.S.T. Team*® model* provides the direction to begin building trust and candor.

For New Leaders

As a new leader, you are likely excited and anxious to make an impact in your new role. *Creatives Talk Experience*® is one of the foremost ways to start down the path to success. This book, combined with *Creatives Lead*®, provides you with practical instruction to engage in open and transformative dialogue with your team of direct reports. It will also challenge how you think about leadership and apply your creative discipline. Our *B.E.S.T. Team*® model* provides the roadmap you need to begin building a foundation of trust, diversity, and openness.

For Mentors

Mentoring leaders can happen at work, through industry organizations, during scheduled time, or spontaneously. Mentoring can happen with colleagues, employees, friends, or family members. In a

mentoring agreement, the mentee tends to guide the relationship. The mentor is in an advisory role. Mentees ask questions and take advice. As a leadership mentor, you should allow your mentee to initiate regular meetings. What questions and topics do they feel they need to discuss? Encouraging your mentee to read *Creatives Lead*© and use this book will supply them, and you, with a framework for a successful mentoring relationship.

For Coaches

Creative coaching is growing more than ever. Creative leaders (new and seasoned) want success in life, business, and creative expression. They need help to navigate through limiting beliefs and unhealthy self-talk.

As a professional coach, you should work with your coachee to set up regular sessions. Use the book, *Creatives Lead*©, and *Creatives Talk Experience*© as a resource to ask questions and challenge your leaders in areas of empathy, authority, emotional intelligence, and influence. Like any good coach, you want your leader to discover the solutions for themselves. You want them to become the best leaders they can be—for themselves and their employees. The questions here are meant to be a starting point. Our *B.E.S.T. Team*© model* will be the beginning of a transformational growth experience.

Tips for Creating the Optimal Experience

There are up to forty topics you can cover in the weeks ahead. Use the questions in *Creatives Talk Experience*© as a launch pad to more in-depth discussion and growth. Listen to the person/group. Play off their answers to these questions and ask your own deeper-probing questions.

Structure your time in a way that works for you, but I have found these strategies helpful:

- Meet once a week for thirty to sixty minutes.
- Review the questions provided before you meet.
- Pick the most appropriate questions for your person/group.
- Before you meet, write out your own questions on the topic(s).

- Use open-ended questions that promote conversation.
- Understand the goals of each discussion.

There is a compiled list of the discussion goals in the back of the book that you can quickly reference.

- Be open, honest, and vulnerable.
- Set the tone by reading the experience story of other leaders. If you find the story does not fit with your mentee/group, there are additional stories in the back of the book.
- Talk less and listen more.
- Be engaged and empathetic.
- Be encouraging, but do not shy from harsh truths.
- Be accountable and hold others accountable.

As you go through this material, please share with me your wins, recommendations, and frustrations. I truly desire to hear from you and want the best for you in your career. Leave your thoughts and comments at www.creativeslead.com.

Learn, apply, and have fun!

-Eric

* While the strategies of the *B.E.S.T. Team*© model are included in *Creatives Lead*©, the model will be unpacked more in a forthcoming book.

Quadrant One: Building

Getting to Know the Team

In this first phase, you are going to talk about the team, understanding the team's dynamics, adding and removing from the team, and the value of a strategic team off-site.

Discussion One

Treat People the Way You Want to Be Treated

“Seek to understand before being understood,” as Stephen R. Covey is often quoted. A leader should spend time getting to know the team—their strengths, weaknesses, hopes, and dreams.

Discussion Two

Look People in the Eye

Building trust is tantamount to creating a high-performing team. This week you will discuss respect, competence, and how to care for the team.

Discussion Three

Use Your Words

Setting clear expectations, reviewing the role of communication, and establishing accountability for the months ahead will be the focus of this discussion.

Discussion 1

Treat People the Way You Want to Be Treated

There are four topics you can discuss this week. Based on who is attending, choose the question(s) from each topic that you believe to be most important and focus your time on those. You also have space to write your own questions.

Topics for discussion:

- Put Yourself in Their Shoes
- Understanding Temperaments
- When Hiring
- Retaining or Releasing



Set the Stage

Discussion 1: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but be aware of driving the discussion toward these goals:

- It is critical to a leader's success that he build empathy and understanding amongst his team and peers.
- Hiring and releasing employees is tough and emotionally draining but sometimes necessary.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics for this discussion or you might have your own story to tell. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling is a primary way to set the tone for the discussion and a great way to build empathy.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees after the discussion.
- Wrap up and set the next date/time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. Have you set up time to meet with each of the team members?
2. Did you take the temperament assessment at www.creativeslead.com/resources?
3. Have the members on the team taken the assessment and provided you with their results?
4. Have you created *temperament grids* for the team? See the *Creatives Lead Companion Workbook*© for additional grids.

5. What team changes, if any, do you see that need to be made?
6. Are there any performance issues?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. How well do you know the people on your current team? What can you do to get to know them better?
2. Did you take the temperament assessment at www.creativeslead.com/resources?
3. What do you think are the temperament types of your coworkers?
4. How can you begin to speak their temperament language?
5. Are any of your coworkers struggling to do their job? How can you encourage them?
6. How are you building empathy with your peers?
7. How are you building your personal brand with other leaders?



Wrap-Up for Discussion One

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what each attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

Leading an Existing Team

Aida Najarian is the Senior Manager of Digital Experience and Design at one of America's most reputable banks. Having been a senior practitioner and seasoned leader, Aida has built and led new and existing teams for several decades.

Sometimes, as a new leader, you step into a team that may be disappointed because they recently lost their "favorite" boss. When it comes to empathy and experience in a challenging team environment, Aida has amazing words of wisdom we should all heed.

Aida: "One of the more challenging situations is taking over another leader's team—especially if they were well-liked by the team and their partners. This is an interesting relationship challenge because you are the unknown element coming into the team. If the prior leader was successful, had good relations with internal peers and partners, as well as with her direct reports, the change is hard for everyone.

In the first thirty to sixty days of your new role, spend a very intensive fifty percent of your time on your new partners. Spend the other fifty percent on your new team."

Aida recommended the following do's and don'ts:

- DO spend your first thirty days meeting people, listening, observing, learning—be a sponge.
- DO understand the entire context you are entering; people, processes, work, tools, industry, etc.
- DO check in frequently with your leadership.
- DO meet with your predecessor, if you can, and get their perspective on the partners, team, work, etc.

- DO be aware of your own baggage you are bringing into this new role and situation.
- DON'T always expect a warm reception from everyone.
- DON'T try to make huge changes in your first thirty days unless you are mandated to do so.
- DON'T try to follow or imitate the style of your predecessor. But also, don't throw out the baby with the bathwater.
- DON'T talk about yourself and what you plan on doing.

Specific to the team, I'd recommend:

- DO meet with each member of your new team one-on-one in your first two weeks. Be genuinely curious.
- DO acknowledge that they might have a certain amount of trepidation, fear, and anxiety about meeting you and getting to know you.
- DO find out what their professional goals are.
- DO find out if they are challenged in their work assignments.
- DO find out if anyone on the team interviewed for the position you now have. Be sensitive to the potential disappointment they might have and get ahead of any possible resentment. If they are a valuable team player, find ways to give them leadership responsibilities to groom them for the next leadership position.

You will want to learn about them as a group. Find out: What challenges do they collectively face? What have been their past successes?

"Gauge the team's readiness for change. Have a team meeting to discuss how they feel about change, and then use their response as a barometer for pace. Share your vision and values. Finally, acknowledge that you have to earn the team's trust. It won't be granted automatically."

Eric: "Thank you, Aida, for the practical *and applicable* wisdom you have shared here. Building empathy and understanding with the team is truly critical to a leader's success."

Topic 1

Put Yourself in Their Shoes

1. If you are reading *Creatives Lead*®, what do you think about this chapter overall?
2. Can you relate to Carol's story from *Creatives Lead*®—have you said things, while well intentioned, you could not deliver upon? How did that make you feel?
 - a. How did the person or people you “made promises” to respond?
 - b. Hindsight is often 20/20. If you could go back now, what would you do differently?
3. What do you think this phrase from Jefferey Fox means? “What may seem like a ‘whisper’ from you is often heard as a ‘shout’ from the staff?”
4. How do you get to know your people well enough to know what is happening in their lives? Why might you feel uncomfortable with this idea?
5. Walking in the other person’s shoes is a theme of this first topic. Why is this important?

Write your own questions:

Topic 2

Understanding Temperaments

1. If you're reading *Creatives Lead®*, what do you think author Kathleen Edelman means by the need to understand not only *your* "language" but the "language" of *others* to communicate more effectively?
2. As you read the story about Charles and his team in *Creatives Lead®*, how have you seen where differences in temperaments affect teamwork?
3. What kinds of temperament assessments have you taken in the past? What do you think of these assessments in general?
4. What do you see as the value of understanding temperaments?
5. What do you think are the differences between a person's personality and temperament?
6. Would you agree with the idea that *personality* changes over time based on your age, gender, worldview, and environment, while *temperament* is the unique way a person is wired? Why or why not?
7. How have you seen a difference in temperaments impact your relationships? How has it impacted teams at work?
8. Why do you think this topic is important?
9. If you took the assessment, what was your primary temperament? What was your secondary? Do you agree with the results?

Write your own questions:

Topic 3

When Hiring

1. If reading this chapter, in *Creatives Lead*®, how will you change the way you interview?
2. Why is hiring critical to the success of your team/company?
3. What kind of team or company culture is attractive to you?
4. Do you believe you can have a team culture that is different from the company's? What kind of culture would you create? Why?
5. How are you networking today?
6. Why is it important to continue to network?
7. What type of resumés do you prefer and why?
8. What do you look for in a creative portfolio?
9. What do you think about the idea of hiring slow and firing fast?
10. Do you believe past behavior can be a predictor of future behavior? Why or why not?

Write your own questions:

Handwriting practice lines for the word 'apple'.

Topic 4

Retaining or Releasing

1. If you're reading *Creatives Lead*®, what do you think about this chapter overall?
2. Can you relate to Sam's story from *Creatives Lead*®? How?
 - a. Do you think Sam was treated fairly? Why or why not?
3. Do you agree with the concept, *the slowest moving person on the team governs the pace of the team*?
4. When or how do you know it is time to release an employee?
5. Why should releasing an employee *never* be a surprise to the employee?
6. How familiar are you with the Human Resource processes required in your organization?
7. What do you see as the value of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)?
8. As much as possible, what are some ways to prevent ever having to release an employee?

Write your own questions:

Discussion 2

Look People in the Eye

There are three topics for your second discussion. Building trust is tantamount to creating a high-performing team. Showing respect, competence, and that you care are topics to probe during your time.

Topics for discussion:

- Show Respect
- Show You Care
- 5 Keys to Competence



Set the Stage

Discussion 2: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but consider driving the discussion toward these goals:

- Demonstrating genuine care for employees builds loyalty and trust.
- Employees will respect you more when they know you have a level of competence in their discipline.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics for this discussion or use your own story. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling is a primary way to set the tone for the discussion and build empathy.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees afterwards.
- Wrap up and set the next date/time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. Have you discussed your expectations with the team?
2. Have you set expectations with each team member?
3. How are you encouraging the team this week? How are you showing recognition of team members?
4. Have you met your peers?
5. What are you learning about the nuances of leadership in your department/division/organization?

6. Have you looked at your team calendar and scheduled an off-site to discuss vision, strategy, and team building?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. What expectations have you shared with your teammates about how you work or communicate?
2. How can you encourage your teammates and coworkers weekly?
3. What, if any, are the nuances of your job/role?
4. What vision do you have for the work you do, or want to do?
5. What can you begin doing to look at your work from a strategic point of view?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Two

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

Demonstrating Care

I first met Changying Zheng at a conference. “Z” (as she is commonly called) has been a creative leader for over three decades. Currently, she is the Design Operations (DesignOps) Manager for a large content delivery and DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service—think security) company in San Francisco. She is passionate about teamwork and collaboration. Z shared with me how she cares for and encourages teams to bring their best to work.

Z: “I have lived and worked in the Bay Area for the past twenty years. I am originally from China. My entire family lives in China. Each year, I travel to China with my husband and son to visit my family. Seeing family and old friends energizes me. I come back to work with a refreshed outlook.

In 2020, the global pandemic affected many of us. I had to cancel my trip to visit my family at the beginning of the pandemic. Unfortunately, my father passed away in June 2020 during the height of the pandemic. At that time, there was no way I could travel back to China. Many of my friends in China helped my family handle all the logistics in my absence. I buried myself in work to cope with the situation. It took a job change and a two-week break for me to bounce back to be energized again.

Eric: “Z, I am so sorry to hear that about you and your family. Our personal lives can have a profound impact on our work lives. How did this impact you as a leader?”

Z: “I know how personal life can affect our work. My personal experiences have shaped how I now lead my team. As a result, I focus on demonstrating care for the team.

“To be able to care, I need to get to know the team members first. So, for the first few months, I spend time setting up one-on-

ones to learn about our designers. Not only just about their work challenges but also about their life challenges. I do care very much about their career aspirations, but that can be the focus for their direct managers. For me, what I am more interested in is what life and work challenges are blocking them from bringing their best self to work.

“Since the pandemic’s beginning, I have helped our design group implement several programs to care for our people. One of them is the ‘Creative Recharge Day.’ Each quarter, the product design team will identify one day as the ‘Creative Recharge Day’ for our members to recharge their creative batteries. There are no meetings and no deliverables on that day. We ask our designers to block their calendars and log off. We ask them to unplug and focus on what recharges them as creatives: Read, write, paint, play music, go for walks. Do whatever helps bring their best self to work.”

Eric: “I love the ‘*Creative Recharge Day*’. I have seen that successfully implemented in several other companies and it is a great way to show and build trust with leadership. What other tips do you have?”

Z: “Know what energizes you. Determine what type of activities energize you. Figure out how to start something that you can do in one day. Or have a plan to do it one day each quarter.

“Continue learning. Look for new experiences that will give you a different perspective on cultures, technologies, and innovative ideas. You don’t need to enroll in classes to learn new things. Instead, take a day to read, write, teach, visit museums, chat with a mentor, etc.

“Spend time outdoors, *away from a computer*. A change of scenery sparks creativity for many folks.

“Develop a creative hobby. Being well-rounded is not only crucial for professional development but broadens our perspectives and helps create empathy. In return, we can be more inclusive.

“Relieve stress. There is no denying that the pandemic has created a lot of stress for people. Stress impacts our daily work, and

while some pressure can be healthy, too much can be very detrimental as creative contributors. Create a space to stretch, meditate, or jam to a favorite song. Leave stress behind.

“We measure a team’s success in many enterprise companies by looking at their output. So, we talk about Objectives and Key Results (OKR) or Key Performance Indicators (KPI). These are all very important for business. However, to achieve higher performance, our team members need to be able to bring their best self to work. So team member happiness is the bottom line. As a design-ops leader, it is dear to my heart—Care for my team, care for my team members.”

Eric: “Thank you, Z. That should be near and dear to all our hearts. Genuine care for employees not only builds trust but loyalty as well.”

Topic 5

Show Respect

1. If you're reading *Creatives Lead*®, how have you ever felt like Xavier—not feeling appreciated or acknowledged for your hard work? How did you respond?
2. How do you like to be encouraged and appreciated? Give examples.
3. Do you think other team members want to be appreciated the same way you do? Why or why not?
4. In light of this discussion, how and when should you show respect to team members?
5. Does creative expression bother you? Why or why not?
6. Describe how Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) impacts you.
7. How can you let team members express themselves creatively in the workplace?
8. If you're working in the office, have you searched for and looked at the images of Pixar® and Zappos® employee cubicles? What did you think?
9. Would you (or the company) allow cube, office, locker, or desk decorating in your organization? Why or why not?

Write your own questions:

Topic 6

Show You Care

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, what do you think about this chapter overall?
2. From *Creatives Lead*®, what does “overcoming buddy relationships” mean to you?
3. *Creatives Lead*® discusses encouraging and developing people on the team. What are other ways to demonstrate caring?
4. How well do you know what is going on in the lives of team members?
5. If you were promoted from within the team, how do your team members feel about you now?
6. Since moving into leadership, how have you seen your work relationships change?
7. How do your previous work relationships need to change?
8. How do you currently demonstrate care for team members?
9. Why might you be intimidated to admit you have knowledge gaps?
10. If you have come from another organization, why should you refrain from quickly implementing past ideas with the new team?

Write your own questions:

Topic 7

5 Keys to Competence

1. If you are reading *Creatives Lead®*, can you relate to Deena's story?
Why is competence important to the team?
2. What are your short-term goals as a new leader?
3. What are the goals for your team over the next six to nine months?
4. What current obstacles are you facing? How do you plan to overcome them?
5. How does self-discipline, or lack thereof, impact your life and the lives of those around you?
6. Who holds you accountable?
7. What are you doing to maximize your talents and the talents of the team?
8. How does faith impact the way you handle stress in your life?
9. What do you need to learn to be a more competent leader?

Write your own questions:

Discussion 3

Use Your Words

These topics are big! Communication is *the key* to success. You'll discuss strategic team meetings, reinforcing expectations, the importance of communication, and accountability. These are subjects leaders will come back to throughout their careers.

Topics for discussion:

- Leadership Lesson from Little League
- Communicate, Communicate
- Misunderstandings



Set the Stage

Discussion 3: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but try to drive the discussion toward these goals:

- Clear communication is more important today than it has ever been in the past.
- Setting expectations early and often can mitigate frustrations down the road.
- We all need accountability because we do better when others are watching.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics for this discussion or you may have your own story to tell. Remember to be open and transparent. Encourage attendees as they share their thoughts and points of view. Thank them for sharing.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees after the discussion.
- Wrap up and set the next date and time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. Have you planned, or finished planning, a strategic off-site? If not, what has been the roadblock to completing the planning?
2. Share with your mentor or leader your agenda for the off-site. Ask for their feedback.
3. What theme did you create for the meeting to engage the team?

4. Did you use any templates from the *Creatives Lead Companion Workbook*©? What would you change on the template? (Please send any thoughts or ideas to info@creativeslead.com)

Accountability for Leaders in Training



1. Think about the meetings you set up. How can you better prepare an agenda?
2. How can you make sure your meetings are engaging? Give examples.
3. How can you inject fun into your meetings? Give examples.
4. Do you provide any pre-reading or material to provide context for the meeting?
5. Do you make a list of action items and assign them at the end of meetings? Why or why not?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Three

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion? What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

Communication

I first met Andy Christiansen years ago when he was starting his coaching practice. Andy is now helping everyone from Fortune 100 companies to military leadership in the United States Air Force, to level up and win at life and work. I was able to grab some of Andy's time over breakfast and discuss the extremely important topic of communication.

Eric: "Andy, I believe that understanding other people is critical to communicating with them. Throughout your career and travels, what have you learned about this topic?"

Andy: "My wife Nikki and I were traveling in France for our twenty-year wedding anniversary. It was Sunday morning, about a week into our two-week trip. We were having brunch in our very French "local" hotel along with our traveling companions when we overheard, 'Trains do not run on Sundays.' What! That's a huge problem because we had a prepaid hotel reservation that night in Rome, Italy. We needed to get from Monaco, France to Rome, Italy, a seven-hour trip, that day. If not, we would forfeit the night and pay a combined \$600/night to stay in France again. Trains, by the way, are the primary mode of transportation in Europe."

Eric: "What did you do?"

Andy: "My friend, Greg, jumps into action and approaches the concierge. In typical American bravado he asks Jacque, 'Do you know where we can find a rental car?' Jacque responds by throwing up his arms muttering something in French. Most likely saying, 'I do not understand.' Greg asks his question again but *louder* (as if that's going to help). The Frenchman also repeats his response with question mark hands and even more animation and frustration, repeating what he said in French. I'm thinking, 'What a hot mess'

we're in,' but I'm also wondering if Greg is going to go in for round three or just give up the ghost?

"Dejected and frustrated Greg comes back and says we have a problem, we're going to have to figure something else out.

"Not so fast,' I said. 'I have an idea.' As a teacher and student of communication, I decided to experiment and try something I found useful in my own life. Speak the other person's language in order to communicate better. I knew a little French and decided to approach Jacque with, 'Excusez-moi, monsieur...parlez-vous anglais?' Excuse me sir, do you speak English? Jacque responded with, 'Oui-oui,' showing me his thumb and index finger about a half inch apart representing 'a little bit' I then asked, 'Can you help me find a rental car?' And the rest is history; he and I were communicating.

"Ultimately, he pulled out a sheet of paper from behind him with a Hertz automobile rental car company logo on it and a map with directions to the rental car office. He then wrote a name in French. He said, 'Ask for Genevieve. She will take good care of you!' He smiled, I smiled, said 'Merci,' and off I went.

"Walking away I thought, *You have got to be kidding me! Is it really that easy? Are we all that simple?* Speak a little of another person's language/style and they will tune in way more than if you don't. It may even save your day!

"As it turns out, we found Genevieve, secured a teeny-tiny rental car for four and made our adventurous way to Italy.

"How does this apply to life and work? Always approach people with kindness to start. Begin with a warm greeting or a question. Seek to speak in *their language* to gain trust. Then, make your requests clear. And, finally, listen, listen, listen.

"My mother always said, 'Love is being other-person minded.' This is a healthy rule of thumb for clear communication. Start with, what do they need?"

Eric: "And, by *their language*, that can mean understanding their international tongue, like this case, but greater still, their

individual temperament—who they are, as well as how they tend to communicate, right?”

Andy: “Exactly. The bottom line is all about honor to me. Appreciating them.

“You have three options with communication and speaking in someone else’s language: You can manipulate them, you can influence them, or you can honor them. You get to pick.

“This is my grid to speak in *their* language: For the choleric, get right to the point; for the sanguine, be enthusiastic; for the phlegmatic, be kind; for the melancholic, give them facts or research.”

Eric: “I love this! Thanks, Andy, for clearly demonstrating the importance of communication. *Au revoir!*”

Topic 8

A Leadership Lesson from Little League

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, why do you agree or disagree with this chapter overall?
2. The author of *Creatives Lead*® emphasizes paying attention to your words—what you say and how you speak to team members. On a scale of one to ten (not aware to very aware), how aware are you of your speech?
3. With whom do you spend the majority of your time, star-performers or poor-performers? Why?
4. What do you aspire to?
5. What do you think the team members aspire to? If you don't know, how do you plan to remedy that?
6. Have you had *defining moments* in your life? How did they impact you?
7. Think back on your life and career. Who are the people that inspired you to become more? Who were the people that believed in you?
8. When you were in a slump, how did it impact your self-confidence? What did it take to turn you around?
9. What can you do to prevent team members from losing confidence?

Write your own questions:

Topic 9

Communicate, Communicate

1. Why do you think communication is an emphasized topic?
2. How can differing communication styles impact understanding?
3. What additional communication methods would you add to the list from the book (*Creatives Lead*© pages 70-71)?
4. Which communication methods do you prefer and why?
5. How would you be willing to change your preferred communication method for the sake of others?
6. Are you guilty of listening but not truly hearing what another person is communicating? Why or why not?
7. Becoming a better communicator means transmitting clearly and receiving accurately. What do these phrases imply?
8. How will you become a better communicator?
9. How can the type of conversation dictate the appropriate form of communication?

Write your own questions:

Topic 10

Expectations

1. From the list of character qualities on page 76 of *Creatives Lead*®, which one(s) stand out and why?
2. From the list of competencies on page 76-77 of *Creatives Lead*®, which one(s) stand out and why?
3. Have you ever had a moral or character failure?
4. Why do you think there is a double-standard in expecting high character qualities in others but not ourselves?
5. Would you agree that unmet expectations are a major cause of frustration at work and home? Why or why not?
6. What do you think of the idea of wanting something for an employee versus wanting something from them? Why does the concept sound upside down?
7. How are motivations and expectations interrelated?
8. What do you think are the benefits of setting expectations often?
9. How do you think expectation setting, reputation, and trust are connected?

Write your own questions:

Quadrant Two: Engaging Working Through Differences

In this part, you are going to be focusing on each leader, discussing mindsets, learning healthy habits, and modeling healthy leadership values to propel them and the team successfully forward.

Discussion Four

Don't Be Afraid to Ask For Help

You may hit some rough patches as your team gets used to you and you get used to working with them. It's natural. It will smooth out—trust me. To minimize these rough spots, you will spend this week assessing and aligning your strengths and resource needs. You will also spend time in introspection, assessing the leader you are and want to become.

Discussion Five

Work it Out

Part of any endeavor includes conflict. We don't like it, but it happens. How you deal with issues when they arise can define you as a leader. This week you learn to deal with personal and team issues and how to mitigate conflict.

Discussion Six

Take Care of Yourself

You want to prove yourself as a valuable asset to the organization and team. It is easy to put in long hours and time on the weekends to stay on top of work, but don't neglect yourself! This week you'll learn that taking care of *you* is one of the best things you can do for your career, team, and those you love.

Discussion 4

Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help

Your leader(s) may have hit some rough patches as the team gets used to them and they get used to working with the team. It's natural. To minimize these rough spots, you will spend this discussion assessing and aligning the strengths, weaknesses, and needs with your leader(s).

Topics for discussion:

- Set Up a Team That Is Strong Where You Are Weak
- Leadership Insecurity
- You Might Be a Micromanager If...
- How to Deal with Micromanagers



Set the Stage

Discussion 4: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but be aware of driving the discussion toward these goals:

- It is okay to admit your weaknesses. Don't be fake or try to mask your faults. No one can do it all.
- You do not like being micromanaged, so do not do it to others.
- All leaders need to spend time in introspection. It is a healthy part of personal growth.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics or you may have your own story to tell. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling helps set the tone for the discussion and builds empathy with attendees.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees afterwards.
- Wrap up and set the next date and time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. If you are reading, *Creatives Lead®*, how is it going with the Team Profile Sheets? What insights are you gaining?
2. Have you completed the Personal Leadership Evaluation from *Creatives Lead®*? If not, when do you plan to complete it?

3. Ask your mentor/coach to review your Personal Leadership Evaluation Action Plan and make any suggestions or recommendations they see as needed.
4. Are you ready for the team off-site? What items do you need to wrap up?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. Although you may not be responsible for a team, have you noted the characteristics and competencies of your teammates so that you can work more efficiently with them?
2. Do you have an action plan for becoming a leader? If not, why not?
3. Have you spent time in personal reflection on the kind of leader you want to be and the kind of leader you *do not* want to be?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Four

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

About Leader Weakness

Mona Patel is an author and entrepreneur. Her book, *Reframe: Shift the Way You Work, Innovate, and Think*®, has impacted design leaders around the world. Mona recently sold her company, *Motivate*®, to start up another called *Gray Zones*®. Mona took time out of her busy schedule to share her experiences on leadership and the topic of personal weakness.

Mona: “The first thing we need to understand is what our weaknesses are. There are a number of tools that I have used to understand my own weaknesses, but feedback is probably the most powerful. And, feedback, if you know how to accept it, will get into a lot of great areas that help you to understand where others think you could improve. There’s a number of ways that you can go about getting the input that you need to identify your weaknesses, but understanding what they are is the first step.

“The second thing I think about is understanding why a weakness is mine. Some of the weaknesses that I’ve had as a leader are temporary. Some weaknesses are more long lasting. For example, memory is a weakness of mine. It’s just really interesting—I can’t remember things or people’s names. My memory was not great when I was in school, but I learned how to manage it.

“The third thing is around the stories we tell ourselves—limiting beliefs—the things that you gain or lose by having the weakness. Maybe you don’t have to play as big. Maybe you don’t have to be in a certain crowd. Maybe you don’t have to achieve a certain goal because you can always blame a particular weakness.

“So, to sum it up, knowing what the weakness is, knowing why you have it, and knowing the underbelly of it, I think, are really important when it comes to being a leader and being able to use

your weakness as a catalyst for growth. That's what it's all about for me. Better than having your team compensate for it."

Eric: "Many leaders I know, myself included, want to compensate for weaknesses. Some are just not within reach, no matter how hard we try. Talk more about weakness and the team impact."

Mona: "Before I elaborate on that last point, I was thinking a lot of leaders that I know—especially when they're operating primarily out of their alpha mindsets—don't like getting feedback about their weakness, because they judge and they think it's bad. They think they are bad. I'm bad enough. Thinking back, my childhood has been associated with shame, guilt, regret, and negative emotions. And so, if you're a person that avoids negative emotion, which is most of humanity, then weaknesses are probably not your favorite topic to study. Yet, following a more spiritual philosophy around this, understanding them, knowing them, knowing how they show up, and not being afraid of them—just kind of being the observer—is a pretty powerful way to manage your weakness as a leader.

"Okay, back to having your team compensate for weaknesses. When hiring people who are better at doing things than you, we have to remember, people leave. So, dependency is what you have to watch out for there. And, the final point I wanted to make is about *appreciation*. When it comes to team dynamics, if I hire someone who's better than me at operations, more logic oriented, and more financial and operational oriented, and they do a great job, my responsibility as a leader is to make sure I show appreciation."

Eric: "Thank you, Mona, for being open and vulnerable about your weaknesses as a leader. These are good for all of us to remember: know what my weaknesses are, understand why they are unique to me, and what stories have I been telling myself about them? I am glad you added the last points, don't judge yourself harshly and show appreciation to the team for what they bring."

Topic 11

Set Up a Team That Is Strong Where You Are Weak

1. Why do you think this principle, admitting weakness and building a strong team where you are weak, is hard to accept?
2. Have you admitted your weaknesses and insecurities to anyone before? Describe what that felt like.
3. Are you guilty of “faking it”? Why is that?
4. What are your leadership strengths and weaknesses? Would others agree?
5. Leaders need to provide clarity to the team in the face of uncertainty. Why is that needed? Why is that important?
6. What does trusting your team look like? Give examples of ways you can achieve this.
7. How are you receiving praise from your leadership?
8. How are you praising your team members?
9. How does it feel taking responsibility when things go wrong—even when you are not directly involved?
10. Do you know the strengths and weaknesses of your peers and leadership? Why or why not?

Write your own question:

Topic 12

Leadership Insecurity

1. If you're reading *Creatives Lead*, what do you think about the author's assertion that a leader's insecurities can "kill"?
2. Have you reported to an insecure leader? Describe what that looked like and how it made you feel?
3. Have you tried to confront an insecure leader? How did it go?
4. Have you ever left a team or organization because of an insecure leader? Describe that situation.
5. As a new leader, what are you insecure about?
6. Are you managing any insecure team members? What can you do to encourage healthy behavior?
7. What does the following statement mean to you? Insecurity has been described as a war in an unhealthy mind. Why do you agree or disagree with this statement?
8. What will you start doing as a result of this discussion? What will you stop doing?

Write your own questions:

Topic 13

You Might Be a Micromanager

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, what do you think about this chapter overall?
2. What items in the list from *Creatives Lead*® applied to you? Why?
3. Why do you think the author included this chapter?
4. Have you ever worked for a micromanager? What was it like?
5. Would you ever want to work for that kind of person again? Why/why not?
6. Why do you think the leader was a micromanager?
7. Can you empathize with the micromanager? Why/why not?
8. How have you seen micromanager tendencies in yourself? If so, describe what you saw.
9. When is there ever an appropriate time to act like a micromanager?
10. Do you feel you need help in this area? How?

Write your own questions:

Handwriting practice lines for the word 'apple'.

Topic 14

How to Deal With Toxic Relationships

1. If reading *Creatives Lead®*, what do you think about Vihaan's story?
2. How have you noticed any of the qualities described in the story in yourself or others?
3. There are many stresses in life. How can these impact your work and personal relationships?
4. Are any of your relationships toxic? How do you know?
5. What should you do if you are part of a toxic relationship?
6. If you see this in the workplace, how can Human Resources help you?
7. How do you feel about "setting guardrails" in toxic relationships? What would that look like for you? Give some specific examples.
8. At what point do you feel a person should be reported to HR?

Write your own questions:

Discussion 5

Work It Out

Part of any endeavor includes conflict. We don't like it, but it happens. How leaders deal with issues when they arise can define them. This week, you will discuss how to be a leader worth following, how to deal with personal and team issues, and how to mitigate conflict.

Topics for discussion:

- The 10 Commandments for Leadership
- Show Restraint
- Work Through Issues



Set the Stage

Discussion 5: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but consider driving the discussion toward these goals:

- The kind of leader you are impacts the team as a whole.
- Although leaders have positional power, they need to demonstrate restraint.
- Avoiding hard and uncomfortable conversations does not benefit the team or the employee whom you need to speak with.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics for this discussion or you may have your own story to tell. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling sets the tone for the discussion and builds empathy with attendees.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees afterwards.
- Wrap up and confirm the next discussion date.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. Are you using the Team Profile Sheets? What insights are you gaining from them? (See the *Creatives Lead Companion Workbook*® for extra sheets)
2. Have you ever used a journal? If so, how did you primarily use it? Why do you think it might be important to use one as a leader?

3. Why is it essential to capture project, team, or personnel issues in your journal?
4. How does reflection assist in the decision-making process around personnel/team issues? How would it look if you responded to a situation after reflection versus in the moment?
5. Are you familiar with team retrospectives? Have you ever conducted a retrospective before? How did it benefit you and the team? Have you made it a regular part of your culture?

Accountability for Leaders in Training



1. Using a leadership journal can be one of the best habits you undertake. Have you bought one?
2. Have you taken part in a team retrospective? What were the benefits to you and the team?
3. How do you deal with issues on projects or the team when they arise?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Five

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

Working Through Issues

I have known Becky Sehenuk Waite for almost fifteen years. I have worked with her and followed her creative leadership career over this time. Becky has held the roles of Graphic Designer, Art Director, and Director of Digital Communications at various organizations. Currently, she is the Associate Creative Director for the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

When practitioners move into leadership, they typically are ill-equipped for handling tough interpersonal relationships and team challenges. As a new leader, it can be emotionally less draining to avoid, ignore, or dismiss painful interactions. Becky and I met to discuss leading through tough team issues. Here's what she said:

Eric: "Becky, thanks for taking time out of your schedule to meet with me. As we've talked about leading a team, complications often arise. It's natural. We're human. How can you thrive in tough interpersonal relationships?"

Becky: "Tough interpersonal relationships are unavoidable. I often remind myself that if I view a relationship as tough, that person is likely struggling with it in their own way as well. Personalities are complicated and varied and influenced by experience and upbringing and personal struggles. It's unrealistic to think that all relationships will be smooth sailing. With that in mind, I think I can thrive in tough interpersonal relationships by being open and transparent. Openness requires a mutual give and take when it comes to conversations, sharing experiences and emotions. For me, I have found being open creates a safe space for clear communication and transparency. I try to approach all relationships by listening and asking questions with the goal of better

understanding the other person's perspective, especially if it differs from mine. I recognize I usually don't have a complete understanding of a situation or a person, so I do my best to pay attention, display empathy, and be direct in the way I communicate. Navigating tough interpersonal relationships within a creative agency can be especially challenging given how subjective design decisions can be. This is often true for designers who are early in their career. Constructive feedback on work can sometimes be taken personally or negatively and that can put a strain on a relationship. Being able to have a safe conversation and communicate clearly about project objectives is the best way to maintain mutual understanding and alignment. Navigating tough relationships also requires you to have thick skin and a decent amount of humility. It's easy to take feedback as a personal criticism or get defensive about your opinion or work when it's not received well by someone else. As a creative, whether in a leadership role or not, I have found it's helpful to remind myself that my opinion and approach may not be the best, or necessarily liked by someone, and that's okay. It's not always about being right or having control in a situation. The health and progress of the relationship is more important."

Eric: "I agree. Yet, in general, creatives are not good at confrontation. Do you think that is common for other people as well? Why or why not?"

Becky: "I think, in general, people don't like confrontation and most aren't the greatest at it. Confrontation is uncomfortable and can be triggering and divisive. It's hard to not get personally bruised when faced with confrontation. With that said, though, I really believe the more experience you have in confrontational engagements, the better you become at it and the easier hard conversations become. For creatives, confrontation can quickly be blown out of proportion and taken as a personal attack on one's skills or design aesthetic. In general, creative work requires implementing multiple people's opinions, revisions and feedback, and more revisions and more feedback. So by nature, the process

and execution of creative work can be analyzed at a much greater depth than projects that aren't as subjective, such as a financial report or campaign schedule."

Eric: "Exactly. The creative process is often personal in nature. So, how do you work through disagreements in real time?"

Becky: "When facing disagreements in real time, I try to do a lot of listening before sharing my own thoughts. However, each situation is different, and sometimes that approach doesn't prove helpful. Through navigating professional and personal relationships, I have learned that I will not always agree with a person, and disagreeing doesn't always have to be a bad thing. There are certain things I know I will never see eye to eye on with coworkers or even my husband. People are so diverse with such a huge variety of perspectives and opinions, and it's impossible to avoid disagreements at times. I try to be respectful to the other person when working through a disagreement, hear what they have to say, voice my opinions in a calm voice and try to give clear reasoning behind those opinions. When working with a creative team, there are countless opportunities for disagreements on projects and work styles. I feel it's important to respect differences while remaining focused on the main objectives. There have been instances where I have strongly disagreed with someone on something and have chosen to not fight against it and go in the direction the other person wants. If the end result is positive, great. If it's not, then it can be addressed and we can discuss what to do differently. Either way, it can be a learning experience for all involved."

Eric: "I always say, be a lifelong learner. Hearing the perspective of others is certainly a growth opportunity. In a team, how do you make sure everyone is heard?"

Becky: "It's really important in creating a sense of trust and respect among your team for everyone to have a chance to be heard. With different personalities and people processing things in their individual way, it's not a black and white process when making sure everybody has a chance to share their perspective. To make sure

everyone on your team is heard, I typically start by scheduling a meeting for everyone to be together (whether in person or virtually), and I ask specific questions to prompt responses from the team. With my current team of designers, not everyone is comfortable sharing in a group setting, but their input is still valuable. I have one designer who I noticed typically doesn't say much in collaborative meetings, but I know her wheels are turning and she has opinions about things. I asked her one-on-one how she prefers to collaborate with people and what type of thought process she leans into. She shared with me that she needs time to think about things in her own way, outside of a group setting, before feeling comfortable to articulate what she's thinking. Understanding this about her now, I make it a habit to follow up with her individually after a collab session to see if she has any thoughts she wants to contribute. In doing this she feels heard and also feels safe and comfortable to share at her own pace. Reaching out to her is often done in a meeting type environment, but a quick email follow-up works just as well for quicker projects. I still encourage her to share in group meetings, but there isn't pressure to do so. For the rest of the team, I try to open with questions and prompts and give examples of my own to help direct the conversation."

Eric: "Do you feel there is a correlation between trust and engagement? Why or why not?"

Becky: "There is absolutely a correlation between trust and engagement. In a trusting work environment, teammates feel more compelled to engage and collaborate as they feel valued for what they bring to the table. With trust comes respect, and those two things can empower people to do their best work."

Topic 15

The 10 Commandments for Leadership

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, have you ever heard stories that were similar to Heron's? Can you relate to his insecurities?
2. Do you think his story is uncommon? Why?
3. How have you seen stories like Heron's play out in the workplace?
4. If you were in Heron's shoes, how do you think you would have responded?
5. Share your thoughts on the 10 Commandments for Leadership. Which one(s) impact you the most?
6. Think about these questions, then share your thoughts:
 - a. Can you thrive in tough interpersonal relationships?
 - b. Can you find a way when there doesn't seem to be a way?
 - c. Can you be calm and set a good example for your team in the face of adversity?
7. Do you agree with the author's supposition that we drift back to what we know—what is "normal" and safe? Why do you think that is?

Write your own questions:

Topic 16

Show Restraint

1. In the book, *Creatives Lead*®, the author proposes, you are under scrutiny from employees. Why do you agree or disagree?
2. Have you ever been guilty of judging a person's actions before knowing the whole story? Why do you think you did that?
3. What is the difference between positional power and personal power?
4. Share examples of how you have abused power in the past? Why do you think you did that?
5. How might being under scrutiny change how you lead?
6. Why is it difficult for leaders to recognize "Yes-men" or "Yes-women"?
7. What fallacies might you experience by surrounding yourself with "Yes-men"?
8. Restraint has been the topic of this chapter. Why do you think it is important to show restraint with your actions? Your words?

Write your own questions:

Handwriting practice lines for the word 'apple'.

Topic 17

Work Through the Issues

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, working through team issues can be tough. What do you think about this chapter overall?
2. The author states that, in general, creatives are not good at confrontation. Do you think that is common for other people as well? Why or why not?
3. In the story, Bryan had created an environment of trust. Today, the term used often is *psychological safety*.
 - a. Why is this kind of environment important?
 - b. What happens when trust is not present?
4. Think about a potentially painful conversation you are avoiding having with a team member. What can you do to have a conversation that moves toward trust and safety?
5. How do you work through disagreements in real time?
6. How do you make sure everyone is heard?
7. What is your view on gossip? Is the office an appropriate place for it? Why or why not?
8. Do you feel there is a correlation between trust and the level of team engagement? Why or why not?

Write your own questions:

Discussion 6

Take Care of Yourself

You want to prove yourself as a valuable asset to the organization and team. It is easy to put in long hours and time on the weekends to stay on top of work, but don't neglect yourself! This week you'll discuss self-care as one of the best things you can do for your career, team, and those you love.

Topics for discussion:

- The Value of Triangles
- Go Out and Play
- Mandatory Ping-Pong



Set the Stage

Discussion 6: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but be aware of driving the discussion toward these goals:

- Taking care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally is part of being a good leader.
- Awareness of your level of happiness and that of the team is more important than you know.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics or you may have your own story. Remember to be open and transparent. Storytelling is a way to set the tone for the discussion and build empathy.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees.
- Wrap up and confirm next date.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. How are you currently dealing with stress at work or home?
2. Why do you think taking care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally are important as a leadership?
3. How aware are you of your level of happiness when it comes to work?
4. How aware are you of the team's overall level of happiness related to work?

5. How do you see happiness and health being connected?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. How are you currently dealing with stress at work or home?
2. Why do you think taking care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally are important?
3. How aware are you of your love of happiness when it comes to work?
4. How aware are you of the team's overall level of happiness related to work?
5. How do you see happiness and health being connected?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Six

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

Health and Wellness

Dennis Worden has been a successful radio station manager, CEO of Maximum Impact with John Maxwell, author, and is currently an entrepreneur. Dennis is also a good friend and mentor. I caught up with Dennis over dinner to discuss leadership and, more importantly, a leaders' emotional and physical health.

Eric: "So, here we are talking about health over dinner. This way we have to make sure we order something healthy, right?"

Dennis: "Ha! I always try to eat healthy."

Eric: "Tell me, over the course of your career, how have you seen value in exercise?"

Dennis: "Personally, it has provided more clarity and focus. Exercise is a great stress reliever. It models to the team the importance of health, stamina, and longevity."

Eric: "For a leader, what is the value of good nutrition?"

Dennis: "It impacts weight, energy, focus... it's extremely important."

Eric: "Why do you think it is hard for leaders to take care of themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally?"

Dennis: "They get wrapped up in their work and position. Success can sometimes lead one to eat more, or drink more, and become emotionally unhealthy."

Eric: "How do you prioritize physical health?"

Dennis: "After a leader's personal time of meditation and solitude each morning, physical health is a second priority."

Eric: "How do you prioritize emotional health?"

Dennis: "Number one and two, as I would place emotional and mental health in the same category as spiritual health."

Eric: "How does the idea of exercising in small increments to gain momentum appeal to you?"

Dennis: "I believe it best to carve out exercise early each morning. Unless you have complete control of your calendar and emotions, you'll find those small increments throughout the day go by the wayside. Forty-five minutes Monday-Wednesday-Friday at the gym is my ideal, with 45 minutes of walking added on Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday."

Eric: "For those who aren't as disciplined, what are some creative ways to get exercise two to four times a week?"

Dennis: "Set the alarm, get up and go. For me, I go to the gym where I can feed off the energy of other workout enthusiasts."

Eric: "Sometimes exercise and staying healthy can feel like drudgery. How do you make exercise fun?"

Dennis: "I just do it. Who said it's supposed to be fun? [Laughs] The fun for me is standing in front of the mirror or on the scale and seeing the results."

Eric: "And that's the biggest advantage—the results in a leader's personal life and professional life. Thank you, Dennis, for the great reminder that part of being a good leader means taking care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally. I am still not skipping dessert."

Dennis: "Hehe, me neither."

Topic 18

The Value of Triangles

1. If you are reading *Creatives Lead*®, it may seem odd to add exercise and nutrition in a leadership book. Why do you think the author included these topics?
 - a. In your life, how have you seen value in exercise?
 - b. In your life, what is the value of good nutrition?
2. As a result of reading this chapter, what do you plan to do differently with regard to your health?
3. Why do you think it is hard for leaders to take care of themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally?
4. How do you prioritize physical health in your life?
5. How do you prioritize mental health in your life?
6. How do you prioritize emotional health?

Write your own questions:

Handwriting practice lines consisting of five horizontal lines: a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line, with two blank lines above and below the primary set.

Topic 19

Go Out and Play

1. Does the idea of exercising in small increments to gain momentum appeal to you? Why or why not?
2. How have you begun to “slide” in physical activity?
3. What are some creative ways to get exercise two to four times a week?
4. How can you make exercise fun?
5. Why is it hard to cut down on carbs and sugar? What can you do to help in this area?
6. What do you think about this comment I heard from a physician regarding protein, “You will be eating what the animal or plant ate”?
7. Do you see value in advanced meal preparation?
 - a. What would you need to do to make this a habit?
 - b. What could get in the way of your success in this area?
8. Do you track your fitness?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. If not, what is a way you can make a small step in starting to track your fitness?

Write your own questions:

Topic 20

Mandatory Ping-Pong

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*, what do you think about this chapter overall?
2. Have you ever experienced a workplace where fun was part of the culture? Explain.
3. Do you agree or disagree with this statement, “Happy companies are more efficient and make more money”? Why?
4. Gut check: are you genuinely happy about coming into work? Why or why not?
5. How happy do you think your team is about work? Spend some time expanding on this idea.
6. When you visualize a happy workplace, what does it look like, sound like, smell like, taste like, and feel like? (This is called *Five Sensing*, a technique Disney® employees have used for years.)
7. How can you create a happy culture within your team or department?

Write your own questions:

Handwriting practice lines for the word 'apple'.

Quadrant Three: Strengthening **Uniting as a Team**

In this series of meetings, you will discuss what it means to normalize, maintain focus, collaborate, and build momentum as a team.

Discussion Seven

Classic Over Trendy

Understand your personal leadership style. Don't get caught up in trendy, here-today and gone-tomorrow, leadership fads. You are uniquely you, and your style of leadership should reflect who you are.

Discussion Eight

Pay Attention

Push for focus and remove distractions; be a buffer for your team.

Discussion Nine

The Only Way to Have a Friend Is to Be One

Be human, be real, be transparent.

Discussion 7

Classic Over Trendy

This week you will discuss leadership styles and how one's style affects the team and productivity.

Topics for discussion:

- Trendy Management Styles
- In All Things Balance
- Leadership Styles
- How Leadership Styles Affect Productivity



Set the Stage

Discussion 7: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

While you do not have to read these goals to the attendees, be sure to drive the discussion toward them:

- Do not bother with leadership trends. Be yourself.
- It is healthy to be balanced in your leadership, work habits, and lifestyle.
- Think about shared control when it comes to long-term productivity for the team.



Setting the Tone

You have a choice of reading the experience interview below that aligns with the topics or telling our own story. Be open and transparent. Storytelling is a helpful way to set the tone for the discussion.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees.
- Set the next date and time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. If you are reading *Creatives Lead*®, how is the Personal Moral Inventory going?
2. If you are not reading *Creatives Lead*, what would it look like for you to do a personal evaluation? What areas of your life would you look at and why?
3. What consumes your thought life?
4. How do you treat employees and peers?

5. Do you tend to be optimistic or pessimistic? Why?
6. In most things, what is your motivation?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. If you are reading *Creatives Lead*®, how is the Personal Moral Inventory going?
2. If you are not reading *Creatives Lead*, what would it look like for you to do a personal evaluation? What areas of your life would you look at and why?
3. What consumes your thought life?
4. How do you treat teammates and peers?
5. Do you tend to be optimistic or pessimistic? Why?
6. In most things, what is your motivation?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Seven

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

Developing My Leader Style

Julie Arnold is one of those creative people you instantly like when you meet. It is no wonder she retired to become a greeter at Disney.

Before retiring, Julie was a Broadcast Media Director for a large international nonprofit organization. Julie and I were able to catch up between her trips back and forth from Atlanta, Georgia to Orlando, Florida.

While we discussed several topics, I have always been interested in learning how leaders lead from their authentic selves. In short, how they develop their leadership style. Here is what Julie said...

Eric: "Julie, I remember being influenced by books and those around me when I was a new leader. I saw people who were successful and thought to myself, 'I want to be a leader like them.' But, I quickly learned I was not them. I was different and needed to be my authentic self. How did you develop your leadership style?"

Julie: "I learned you need to determine your personality or temperament type before you do anything! Make sure you *want* to lead people. It is sometimes a thankless job, sometimes a rewarding job, sometimes difficult job, sometimes relentless job. However, if you are the leader type, you thrive on all these descriptions!"

Eric: "That's great! I am a big believer in the impact of temperaments on a team. What else?"

Julie: "If you are passionate about what you are doing, you will want to make sure you are leading people to be passionate about it as well. This means working well together—or as I like to say—playing together well."

Eric: "Agreed. The team picks up on your temperament. Whether they recognize it or not, they take cues from how you lead. That can seem daunting to a new leader. What advice would you give

to someone that is in the leadership pipeline or has recently been promoted?”

Julie: “I did not have a clue how to lead people much less develop my leadership style and I certainly did not have the time to go back to school. My feet were on the ground and we were running! Fortunately, my leader took us through some powerful books which I will share with you. Okay, I’m only sharing one because I think it’s that important. *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, by Patrick Lencioni.”

Eric: “That has been one of my favorites. I think every leader or wannabe leader needs to read it. As a consultant, I am sure Patrick has seen it all. What other tools would you recommend to a leader?”

Julie: “If you don’t know your personality type, there are sixty eleventy million tests that will help you determine that. But okay—Myers Briggs, Enneagram, DISC—just google it. I also hear you have one called the *Creatives Lead Temperament Types*©.”

Eric: “Thanks. Yes, it is shorter than many, but a great tool for new leaders. I’ve heard the saying that temperaments are like different languages. You need to learn the languages of your team.”

Julie: “Because I had a team of leaders with different gifts (music, production, administration, drama, media, guest services) I discovered late in the game that they all spoke *different languages*. In general meetings, I tried to become more of an overview leader with general steps. In personal meetings, I spoke their language. The Music leader was chill, the Production leader was a detail/new technology person, the Drama leader was a pop culture person, and Guest Services was a former Disney person. I made sure I talked about their interests in our conversation *and*, this is key, I made sure I was knowledgeable about their interests. This heightened my credibility and even my trust with them.”

Eric: “Sounds like a lot of effort.”

Julie: “Yes, but it was worth it in the end. We had a great team! Everyone felt that way.”

Eric: “Awesome. Thanks, Julie for being you!”

Topic 21

Trendy Management

1. If reading *Creatives Lead©*, why is the author covering this topic?
2. What have you experienced as a *trendy* management style?
 - a. Do you feel like it brought out the best in you? Why or why not?
 - b. Why is it tempting to grab onto a particular leadership trend?
3. Why do you think the author mentioned caring for your team in this chapter?
4. Were you familiar with Dale Carnegie before reading this chapter?
 - a. Why do you think Carnegie's principles are still applicable?
 - b. Which of these principles have you found yourself applying today?
 - c. What is one principle that you would like to use but have not?
5. If you were to describe your leadership style, what would you say makes it uniquely you?
6. Do you feel you are consistent in your leadership approach?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. What would it take for you to be consistent?

Write your own questions:

Topic 22

In All Things Balance

1. What do you think about when you think of life balance?
2. Is balance in life attainable? Why or why not?
3. What is the difference between *attaining balance* in life and *a balanced approach* to life?
4. What do you think about the idea of “negative excellence” — the idea that striving for high degrees of excellence in one or two areas often leads to failure in others?
5. How can you schedule your time to be balanced in work and in other aspects of your life?
 - a. Do you have a hard time saying “no” to requests made of you?
 - b. Why does the *urgent* often crowd out the *important* things of life?
6. Do you agree with the idea that we do not need to commit more time than necessary to personal weaknesses? Why or why not?

Write your own questions:

Topic 23

Leadership Styles

1. If you are reading *Creatives Lead*®, which style do you find yourself gravitating toward and why?
2. Which style do you find yourself resisting and why?
3. Which style do you most often apply and why?
4. What is the difference between applying *your style* of leadership and applying a *situational style*?
5. In your opinion, what are the strengths of each situational style:
 - a. Dictatorial
 - b. Authoritative
 - c. Consultative
 - d. Participative
6. What style do you think is most common in the department or company where you work? Why?
7. Which style do you feel is most appropriate for your team and why?

Write your own questions:

Handwriting practice lines for the word 'apple'.

Topic 24

How Leadership Styles Affect Productivity

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, what do you think about this chapter overall?
2. How do you view your authority as a new leader?
3. How will you use your influence and authority?

List your top three objectives (these may relate to you, the team, or others):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
4. How do you view the members of your team?
5. How do you (or will you) treat the members of your team?
6. When you think of people in general, are you optimistic, pessimistic, apathetic, or indifferent? Why?
7. How do you relate to the people around you at work, home, and in your community?
8. What comes to mind for you when you think about sharing control?

Write your own questions:

Discussion 8

Pay Attention

This week, as your leaders continue to build momentum, you will discuss distractions. Staying focused on the *important* will keep you from getting sucked into the *urgent*.

Topics for discussion:

- Focus
- Distractions
- The Power of Enthusiasm



Set the Stage

Discussion 8: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but be cognizant of leading the discussion toward these goals:

- Maintaining focus on team goals and how they ladder up to company goals may be the most profitable thing you can do.
- Focusing on what is important at work (and in life) mitigates the tyranny of the urgent.
- Being engaged and energetic gets noticed by leadership and increases your personal brand.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics or you can tell about your own experiences. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling is a primary way to set the tone for the discussion.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees.
- Confirm the next date and time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. What are you and the team focused on now?
2. How have you used a priority matrix before? How helpful was it?
3. Have you ever used a 'Not-To-Do' list? Why/why not did you find it helpful?

4. Have you tracked your time over a week to see where your time was spent the most?
5. Did you analyze how your time was spent? What did you do as a result of your findings?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. What are you focused on this week?
2. How easy is it to lose focus during any given day? Why?
3. How have you used a priority matrix before? How helpful was it?
4. Have you ever used a 'Not-To-Do' list? Why/why not did you find it helpful?
5. Have you tracked your time over a week to see where your time was spent the most?
6. Did you analyze how your time was spent? What did you do as a result of your findings?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Eight

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

A Lesson in Focus

My good friend Seth Rexilius is a world class Art Director and partner of WonderWild, a branding and design studio for food and beverage brands by day, freelance logo and brand designer by night. He is also a husband and father of six.

I recently talked to Seth Rexilius about creative leadership and the need for focus. With his crazy schedule, I was interested in how he stayed on target. Here is what Seth had to say:

Eric: "Seth, you are one of the busiest guys I know professionally and personally. With all your time demands, how do you stay focused?"

Seth: "Focus has become increasingly difficult for almost every workplace, especially digital. Being addicted to your phone has been normalized in today's culture, and the impacts of that bleed over into every phase of life, work and play alike."

To combat this, Seth lists a few things that are critical to creating a focus-friendly environment:

- Understanding your natural energy zones and playing to your strengths. We're all wired a bit uniquely, and understanding when in the day you are most likely to get in the zone and remain focused is an important first step of the process. Morning, mid-day or evening—give yourself space to do focused work when it's the path of least resistance.
- Deep work is critical (see the Cal Newport book by that same name). Shutting off distractions and focusing on a singular task for a set period, usually one to two hours, allows you to maximize your energy and compound the impact focused work can have in your workday. The reality is we all only have a few

hours of deep work in a given day, so being intentional about protecting deep-work time is crucial to a productive day or week.

- Taking care of yourself physically. Everyone knows sleep, diet and exercise are important to a healthy lifestyle, but if you're not intentional with these things, it's easy to develop bad habits that sabotage your best self.
- Your external space influences your internal state. Having a work environment that's comfortable and designed to help you get work done is another important ingredient of successful focus. Refining your office space can have an exponential effect on your ability to do deep work.

Eric: “I am glad you mentioned workspace. Many designers I know have a lot of creative prompts and resources in their space. It is easy to become cluttered. I remember having a fellow student in art school tell me, ‘Oh, you must be a neat freak’ because I had my cube organized [laughing]. I call it organized clutter, because I have piles, but I can tell you everything I have in those piles. And, don’t mess with my piles because I will not be able to find what I need.

“Seth, these are extremely helpful tips. I have not read *Deep Work* but have heard of the book and will add it to my list.”

Seth: “Focus will always be something we have to fight for; passivity ensures mediocrity. Know thyself, and whatever you’re able to control throughout your workday—yourself, your space, your time, your environment, your attention—craft your day to enable a pattern of focused work.”

Eric: “I like it, but as I said, I tend to be more organized than other creatives. What would you say to the person who is skeptical about this topic and feels creative when the muse hits them?”

Seth: “Investing in your seemingly minuscule day-to-day decisions is the best way to compound the long-term success of productive, focused work.”

Eric: “Well said. Thanks Seth.”

Topic 25

Focus

1. If you are reading *Creatives Lead*®, how do you feel about this chapter overall? Why?
2. How do you see focus lacking at work?
3. On a scale of 1-10 (1=low and 10=high), how well do you stay focused at work on a daily basis? Weekly? Quarterly?
4. Why do you think *focus* is hard today?
 - a. What do you think contributes to this?
 - b. Where do you have a hard time focusing?
 - c. How can you improve your focus?
5. What is the kind of work your team finds hardest to focus on?
6. How can you *protect* your team in order to allow them time to focus?
7. What regularly consumes your time and attention?
 - a. Similarly, what regularly distracts you?
 - b. Why do you allow it to distract you?
8. What do you *need to stop* doing in order to focus better?

Write your own questions:

Topic 26

Distractions

1. What is currently distracting you and why?
2. What distractions have you created? What can help you eliminate these distractions?
3. What are the important things in your life right now and why?
4. What does your current to-do list look like?
5. How are exercise, diet, rest, and a hobby important to avoiding distractions?
6. How do you prioritize your day? Week?
7. Have you been tracking your to-do's? As a result, what do you need to stop doing?
8. Have you used the Pomodoro Technique?
 - a. If so, did it help you or not?
 - b. If it did not help, why not?
9. How can reviewing your day help you with distractions?
10. How can regular time with friends and family keep you from getting distracted throughout the week?

Write your own questions:

Topic 27

The Power of Enthusiasm

1. How can enthusiasm have a positive impact on your team?
2. What gets you excited about making a difference at work?
3. If you're in a place where you do not feel enthusiastic about what you are doing, what options or opportunities do you see around you?
4. How can you get excited about what you're working on?
5. What needs to happen for you to get enthusiastic about work; a change of *pace* or a change of *place*?
 - a. How can a change of *pace* get you and the team enthused?
 - b. How can a change of *place* get you and the team enthused?
6. What is it that gets you fired up?
7. How will you choose to impact your team with enthusiasm?

Write your own questions:



Handwriting practice lines consisting of five horizontal lines: a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line, with two blank lines above and below the main set.

Discussion 9

The Only Way to Have a Friend Is to Be One

As you continue to move the group toward higher performance, you should be recognizing that nothing gets done without your friends, peers, and the team. This week you will discuss the ever-present need for teamwork, collaboration, and co-creation.

Topics for discussion:

- It's All About We
- Stop Covering Your A\$\$
- The Leadership Lone Ranger Is Dead



Set the Stage

Discussion 9: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but be aware of driving the discussion toward the following goals:

- Collaboration does not come naturally. Leaders have to be intentional about working together.
- *Cover-Your-A\$\$ leadership* is not healthy and is a symptom of a deeper personal or organizational issue.
- *Leadership Lone Rangers* are more harmful than helpful to the team and organization.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics or you may have your own story to tell. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling is the primary way to set the tone for the discussion and build empathy amongst attendees.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees.
- Confirm the next date and time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. Would you say you have a *fixed mindset* or a *growth mindset*? Why?
2. Have you ever considered getting a coach? Why or why not?
3. Who are your role models and why?
4. Why do we need *truth-tellers* in our lives?

5. How would you feel if you received a handwritten thank-you card from a leader in the organization? Have you considered writing one to each of the team members?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. Would you say you have a *fixed mindset* or a *growth mindset*? Why?
2. Have you ever considered getting a coach or mentor? Why or why not?
3. Who are your role models and why?
4. Why do we all need *truth-tellers* in our lives?
5. How would you feel if you received a handwritten thank-you card from a leader in the organization? Have you considered writing one to each of the team members?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Nine

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

Teamwork & Change

Ken Willis is an entrepreneur, CEO, and former Vice President of Change Leadership-U.S. Sales at PepsiCo. Ken was gracious in making time for me to discuss the critical topics of teamwork and change.

Eric: “Teamwork can be hard, but teamwork while going through company or departmental change can be extremely challenging. Why is that?”

Ken: “It requires acknowledgement that something is broken. But, this can be an opportunity as well—an opportunity to get out of your comfort zone and be innovative. Unfortunately, some leaders may feel there could be a negative effect on them or their close colleagues.”

Eric: “Why is that?”

Ken: “Because some leaders are fearful—fearful of being wrong, making mistakes, or making tough decisions. Others are resistant to change or want *conditional* changes. Some are afraid of collaboration across multiple functions they cannot control. Change will either be sabotaged or agreed to conditionally—if *they* control it. I have seen some instances where leaders like that had to be removed in order for change to succeed.”

“Change is essential to growth. It is essential to maintaining pace with a rapidly transforming environment. Just ask Kodak or Blockbuster if change is important.”

Eric: “So, how does this play out at the team level?”

Ken: “Collaboration and teamwork are keys to change. With large or small efforts, all the players have to function as a team in order to implement new strategies and processes.”

"I remember when I bought an educational software company. The brand was stale, the development costs were high, the sales team was limited, lead generation was inefficient, the software platform was not conducive to easy updates, and the market penetration had missed opportunities.

"We ended up rebranding, I think you had something to do with that. We also transitioned to an online delivery subscription model, used appropriate ad campaigns with proper calls to action, and expanded to markets like English as a Second Language (ESL) and Business-to-Customer (B2C)."

Eric: "I remember. There were a lot of changes over a compressed period."

Ken: "Yes it was, but the results made the difference. We saw expanded market penetrations. The legacy product also saw resales. Moving online was vital for a newer customer. It allowed us to make upgrades faster and reduce selling costs. Overall, everything went up as a result of change and collaboration."

Eric: "That's a great story to share, Ken. What would you say was the impetus to make all those changes so quickly?"

Ken: "Having a growth mindset was absolutely necessary. It was the fastest way to distinguish the team, it attracted the best talent, and it was a lot more fun than trying to master the old redundancies of 'running the trains on time.'"

Eric: "Great insights. Thank you, Ken, for your advice and wisdom on these topics. I can see where leaders with a Cover Your A\$\$ mentality or lone ranger attitude will never succeed in creating trust, collaboration, or innovation in a changing environment."

Topic 28

It's All About We

1. What comes to mind when you think about collaboration?
2. What do you think is the difference between *collaboration* and *co-creation*?
3. How well do you collaborate? Would your coworkers agree with your answer?
4. How well does your team collaborate? How do you know?
5. Why is collaboration important? How does it positively impact a project?
6. How do divergence and convergence profit the collaborative process?

Divergence = working on ideas separately

Convergence = sharing with the broader group the ideas worked upon separately

7. How is discipline an important part of collaboration?
8. How are you currently building support (and collaboration) across your organization?

Write your own questions:

Topic 29

Stop Covering Your A\$\$

1. If reading *Creatives Lead®*, what do you think about this chapter overall?
 - a. Have you ever experienced anything like the lead-in story described? What were your feelings during that time?
 - b. Do you agree with the author, that many in today's workforce are out for themselves? Why or why not?
2. What do you think about the idea that people who challenge you, care about you?
 - a. What would it take for you to have this kind of outlook?
3. Do you fear being real, honest, and accountable with your team and peers? Why or why not?
 - a. How could these actions not make you popular with your team and/or peers?
4. Are you more interested in looking out for yourself or serving the team? Why?

Write your own questions:

Topic 30

The Leadership Lone Ranger Is Dead

1. If you are reading *Creatives Lead*®, can you relate to Aria's story—have you had coworkers you did not get along with even after attempting to work together? Describe what happened.
2. How have you seen evidence of the lone ranger in your career?
 - a. What has been your experience dealing with these kinds of leaders?
 - b. What are the pros and cons of this kind of leadership style?
3. As a new leader, what are you fearful of?
4. Would you say you have a growth mindset? Why or why not?
5. Who are the partners/trusted confidants in your current place of work?
 - a. Outside of work?
 - b. In other areas of your life?
 - c. What makes these people special to you?
 - d. Do they share any common traits? If so, what are they?

Write your own questions:

Quadrant Four: Thriving

Performing as a Team

In this last series of discussions, you will discuss creating long-term culture, planning ahead, and building future success for you and the team.

Discussion Ten

It's Nice to Share

Understanding business finances, being generous, and giving yourself away are the topics for this week. These three simple practices can set up your team culture for a future of high achievement.

Discussion Eleven

I Answered That Question

Don't create a "fear of failure" culture—fail fast, learn, and keep moving forward are the topics for this week.

Discussion Twelve

You're So Creative

Creativity is one secret to success. No matter what you approach in life, approach it from a creative perspective. Whether it be working remote, injecting fun into the workplace, or taking time off to recharge—use it as a creative exercise and keep building for the future.

Discussion 10

It's Nice to Share

This week you will discuss accounting basics. You will also discuss being generous with your time and influence. Giving back to your team is always an investment in your future as well as theirs.

Topics for discussion:

- Sharpening Your Pencil
- The Power Principle
- Replace Yourself



Set the Stage

Discussion 10: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

While you do not have to read these to the attendees, consider driving the discussion toward these goals:

- Understand your company's finances and be willing to share business realities with the team.
- Since you never know how long you will be in your role (or company), don't horde your power. Give it away.
- Intentionally prepare the team and others for your eventual exit.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics or you may have your own story to tell. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling is a primary way to set the tone for the discussion and build empathy.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees.
- Confirm the next date and time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. How aware are you of the department's standing financially?
How about the company as a whole?
2. What financial pressures do you feel the most?
3. Why is it essential to share your authoritative power? How is it helpful for the team?

4. How have you been helping team members in their career paths and advancement?
5. If you are reading *Creatives Lead®*, a eulogy exercise is recommended. What are your thoughts on this exercise?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. Have you considered the department or company finances in your current role? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel the company “owes you”? Why?
3. How have you been growing in your career? What research have you done to grow in your role at work?
4. What would you like to see as the next step in your career? What do you expect it will look like and why?
5. What would be the benefit of writing a eulogy at this point in your career?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Ten

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

A Leader's Power and Legacy

Charles Miller is a recently retired Branch Supervisor of the Centers for Disease Control. Having been in leadership for several decades, Charles has led administrative, creative, and technical people.

As a leader, you have *positional power*. This power can either be kept or given away. What you do with it determines the kind of leader you are, the reputation you have, and the legacy you will leave. Charles and I sat down to discuss these topics.

Eric: "Charles, what do you think about the idea of *leadership power*—is it temporary? Why or why not?"

Charles: "Yes, I believe it is temporary. As we get older and retire, others move into the leadership positions we once held and our power decreases. We may always have some influence, but our true power wanes."

Eric: "Would those around you say you use your power constructively?"

Charles: "I hope so. One can never be sure what others believe or think about you, and not all people will be honest with you. However, some people around me do give me positive feedback on how I use my personal power."

Eric: "Tell me more about the idea of personal power. What arenas in your life do you have *personal power*?"

Charles: "My thought life, how I treat others, how I react to life, how I spend my spare time, what avocations I pursue, how I practice my faith. All these areas are where I can exercise my personal power."

Eric: "What are you doing with the power you have for the time you have it?"

Charles: "I am retired from my professional career, but what power I have left I am trying to use to help others in any way that I can. For example, I try to share my experiences with former colleagues to help them grow in their knowledge."

Eric: "Sounds like you have also been spending time in introspection. I often ask leaders what story they want to tell when they look back over their career. As a recently retired leader, what story can you tell?"

Charles: "I believe that my life is an adventure to be lived. I hope that I have lived out my adventure fully and completely and that as a result, I will leave some small part of the world a better place than if I had not lived."

Eric: "As a leader, what do you think about the idea of replacing yourself?"

Charles: "I think every leader *must* keep this in mind. When I was working, I always tried to identify one or more persons in my organization who could potentially replace me and gave them experiences that would facilitate that possibility."

Eric: "Did you know that you had a reputation in your organization? What do you think that reputation was?"

Charles: "Everyone has a reputation in *any* organization. I hope I had a reputation for being technically sound, honest, and flexible. Someone who worked well with others and someone who was willing to make tough decisions based on whatever information was available when such a decision was required."

Eric: "Speaking of reputation, how would you answer the question, 'On what is your reputation built?'"

Charles: "That's simple. How I treat others."

Eric: "As you look back on your leadership career, what changes would you have made?"

Charles: "I am sure that I have made many mistakes in my life, but by and large I am just thankful for the opportunities given me."

Eric: "How do you want to be remembered when you are no longer with the organization?"

Charles: "By how I treated the people I worked with every day. As someone who treated them with honesty and respect, and who always strived to follow his creator, even when he fell short of his own expectations."

Eric: "Thank you, Charles. I appreciate your candid honesty. We should always be looking for opportunities to give our leadership power away. And then, when we leave this life, we want to finish well and leave a positive and lasting legacy."

Topic 31

Sharpening Your Pencil

1. If you have a copy of *Creatives Lead*®, read the quote from Dave Ramsey (page 233), then ask: What would this entrepreneurial mindset look like on your team?
2. Verne Harnish, in his book, *Mastering the Rockefeller Habits*, has some excellent questions. Ask for responses to these questions:
 - a. Do we have the right processes in place?
 - b. Do we have the discipline for maintaining a competitive advantage? If not, why?
 - c. Is our organization/department/team structured properly?
 - d. Can we deliver consistently? If not, why?
3. Where, on a scale of 1-10, would you rank your knowledge of business operations? (1=low while 10=high)
 - a. How about company finances?
 - b. How about department finances?
4. Do you think *the team* is aware of organizational finances?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. How is this topic important to the team?
5. How do you feel the team would respond if they knew the financial health of the department or company better?
 - a. How would this impact your work?
 - b. How would this impact the work of the team?

Topic 32

The Power Principle

1. Do you think *power* is temporary? Why or why not?
2. What arenas in your life do you have *personal power*?
3. Would those around you say you use your personal power constructively? Why or why not?
4. Are you leveraging your power for the good of others or for your own personal ambitions?
5. How do you want to be remembered by your staff, your peers, your family, your neighbors?
6. When you look back on your work life, what story do you want to tell?
7. The author gives a list of prominent figures from history, sports, and entertainment. Ask:
 - a. What were any common traits about these people?
 - b. Why do you think some crashed in their personal and/or professional life and others soared?
8. What are you doing with the power you have for the time you have it?
9. What work/life changes would you like to make?

Write your own questions:

Topic 33

Replace Yourself

1. What do you think about the idea of replacing yourself?
2. Ask the person/group to respond to the quote below:

“Live on purpose; prepare for your exit; impart what you have learned to those around you—don’t just take it for granted. Build relationships with the team and still be their leader. You cannot be their best friend, but they need to know you care. Their success is your success. Know what is important to them.”—Dennis Worden

3. What stands out to you in this quote? Why?
4. Do you know that you have a reputation in your organization? What do you think that reputation is?
5. When people think of you, what do you want them to believe?
6. How would you answer the question, “On what is your reputation built?”
7. Do you need to rebuild your reputation? Why?
8. How do you want to be remembered when you are no longer with the organization?

Write your own questions:

Discussion 11

I Answered That Question

This week you will discuss the team/department culture you want to create. A culture of ownership, integrity, mutual trust, and responsibility are certainly ideals to move toward. As you move in that direction, you will find that other employees hear about and are attracted to your team.

Topics for discussion:

- Create Culture and Reinforce
- What Do You Think?
- Treat People Like Adults



Set the Stage

Discussion 11: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but be aware of driving the discussion toward these goals:

- You can create a unique culture in the team that is different from the company culture.
- The only way to have meaningful, open, and honest culture on a team begins with your attitude.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics or you may have your own story to tell. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling is a primary way to set the tone for the discussion and build empathy.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees.
- Confirm the next date and time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. Have you ever made a list of the leaders and leadership qualities you admire? Would you be willing to share?
2. How are you driving pace and quality with the team?
3. Have you used the Pace and Quality Worksheet from the book, *Creatives Lead*©? How is it working for you?
4. What kind of action plan have you set up as a result of this work?
5. What level of trust do you have with the team?

6. How much would you say they trust each other? Explain.



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. Would you be willing to create a list of the leaders and qualities you admire as a leadership exercise?
2. How do you see pace and quality being part of your team?
3. Why do you feel driving both pace and quality are important?
4. What kind of personal action plan would you create as a result of the previous exercise?
5. Would you say your team is one that trusts each other? Why or why not?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Eleven

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the next session.

Creatives Talk Experience

How to Create Culture

Brandon Echols is a friend and amazing design leader. He is also Head of Product Design at Confluent.

In our post-pandemic world, creating and establishing a sense of culture has become more difficult. As we continue to move into a world where many teams are remote, people want to connect more than ever before. In this interview, Brandon shares some of his learnings while managing designers all over the world, including the U.S., Canada, India, and Europe.

Brandon: “As a design leader, make sure culture is on your list of goals and that it’s measured for your company. If you don’t, it will cost you in retention and overall well-being. It will cost you more in the long run. You can measure engagement leveraging something like Culture Amp®.

“Building a healthy culture also builds trust/partnerships throughout the team. It leads to more honesty and transparency in every interaction you have. The first place you’ll notice it showing up is in design critiques and designers supporting each other.”

Eric: “I love that. The only way to have an open and honest debate is to build trust. What about the new leader who says, ‘Yeah, I get that. But, how do you do it?’”

Brandon: “You constantly have to take the pulse of the team to understand their comfort level with in-person vs. virtual gatherings. Find common themes or create a space to discuss ideas of what the team would enjoy.

“For instance, we leveraged some time after our quarterly retrospectives to discuss what the team is interested in doing the

following quarter. It also helps build excitement and gives the team something to look forward to.

"Other things include leveraging opportunities around in-person events already happening at your company to save money in the team budget. I rotate between small and larger events quarterly. Explore different types of events and remember those that work. Finally, don't forget to include an option for feedback to gauge what's working well and what's not as successful."

Eric: "It seems teams today are busier than ever before. So, when does this happen?"

Brandon: "You have to find a cadence that makes sense for various types of engagements. Generally, I like to think of having weekly (30-60 min), monthly (60-120 min), and quarterly (a full day) opportunities for social interaction/engagement."

Here's a list of how Brandon and his designers engage as a team:

- Weekly Happy Hour (hosted, and sometimes we make drinks together with suggested recipes).
- Morning coffee and critique.
- Monthly hosted casual meetups (team lunches/working space in local regions).
- Boba monthly award (for those we want to celebrate).
- Care packages during the pandemic.
 - We sent each other (Secret Santa style) care packages of things that each person loves the most. We sent plants, food, toys, games, etc. to designers all over the world. We then had a show & tell to celebrate since we couldn't/wouldn't travel.
- Celebrate anniversaries and birthdays in our all-hands meetings (We also send out small gifts based on a team spreadsheet with their favorite things listed).
- Quarterly meet-ups (virtual vs. in-person depending on comfort level) for:

- Sailing
- Wine tasting
- Game night
- Virtual multiplayer games
- Virtual cooking class
- Homemade Boba (or tea) recipe

Eric: “I love these ideas. With differing temperaments on the team, how do you get people engaged?”

Brandon: “Find those who are naturally comfortable sharing and ask them to demonstrate a skill they might enjoy. For instance, we recently did a virtual ramen cooking class. I sponsored sending everyone on the team ramen from Amazon.

“You have to be mindful of those in different regions and outside of the country. Get to know their comfort level with traveling as well as any visa limitations. You can also explore local team meet-ups and events to be inclusive of those in various geographic locations. We have an EU meetup and a US meetup for our teams.”

Eric: “Brandon, it sounds like you recognize the importance of creating and maintaining a fun, inclusive, and engaging team culture. Thank you for your insights.”

Topic 34

Create Culture and Reinforce

1. If reading *Creatives Lead®*, what do you think about generational leadership and culture styles?
 - a. How do they resonate with you? Why?
 - b. Where and how do you see evidence of these ideas?
 - c. Do you agree with the author that integrity should be the cornerstone of the culture you create? Why or why not?
2. Does culture *really* matter? Why or why not?
3. What does it mean for you to be part owners of your organization?
4. How do you feel about creating a sense of shared ownership and accountability in the team?
 - a. What implications do you see in creating this kind of culture?
 - b. Describe what it would look like on a daily basis.
5. Think over your career. Describe the best culture in which you have worked. Next, describe the worst culture.
 - a. What aspects do you want to bring into the culture you are creating?
 - b. What aspects do you *not* want to bring into your organization?

Write your own questions:

Topic 35

What Do You Think?

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, how would you describe the theme of this chapter?
 - a. As a leader, how does it feel counterintuitive to have an employee help themselves when they come to you for aid?
 - b. What were your thoughts about the conversation excerpt between Stephen R. Covey and Frances Hesselbein? Discuss.
2. Is it hard for you to allow failure with your team members? Why or why not?
3. Are any of your team members Cover Your A\$\$ers, Pleasers, or Schmoozers? How does that make you feel?
 - a. How does it impact your team?
 - b. Have you ever been any one of the three types in your current or previous role?
 - c. What tactics are you taking to prevent this on your team? With yourself?

Write your own questions:

Handwriting practice lines for the word 'apple'.

Topic 36

Treat People Like Adults

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, have you ever encountered people like Fred or Stacie? How did they make you feel?
2. Why does it seem like many employees have “learned helplessness?”
3. Why have we, as leaders and managers, let so many employees get away with sloppy sub-par work and attendance?
4. Why do you think leaders should model humility?
 - a. Why is it hard to be humble in your current company culture?
 - b. Why is humility seen as a weakness?
5. Is it difficult for you to apologize for something that is not your fault?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. As a leader, how does this concept change as you take responsibility for the team?
6. How would you describe a victim mentality or attitude?
 - a. How can you rise above your situation or circumstance?
 - b. How about the team?
7. In your experience, how does attitude precede action?
8. In your career, what are the behaviors, attitudes, qualities and practices that inspire you to be and do your best?

Write your own question:

Discussion 12

You're So Creative

In this next-to-last session you will discuss that being a new leader does not mean you no longer can be creative. On the contrary, you will need to be *very* creative and in new ways.

Topics for discussion:

- Remote Work and Creativity
- The FUN Formula
- Setting Aside Creative Time



Set the Stage

Discussion 12: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

You do not have to read these to the attendees, but be aware of driving the discussion toward these goals. Leaders need to understand:

- Employees crave a consistent, fun, and healthy environment.
- Setting aside learning and creative time is essential for you and the team.
- Making time for personal reflection is a key to leadership balance, health, and growth.



Setting the Tone

You may read the experience interview below that aligns with the topics or you can tell your own story. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling is an important way to set the tone for the discussion and build empathy with attendees.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees.
- Confirm the final date and time.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. How do you maintain a level of creativity?
2. Have you ever taken the team out for a fun event? Why/why not?
3. How do you maintain culture and connection to the team in a remote working environment?
4. Why do you think self-reflection is a key to balanced, healthy, and good leadership?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. How do you maintain a level of creativity at work?
2. Have you taken part in a fun team outing? How did it make you feel about your leader/your team/your work?
3. Do you like working with people or alone? Why?
4. Have you ever spent time in self-reflection about the kind of leader you want to be? What was that time like?



Wrap-Up for Discussion Twelve

Confirm learning and application points. Ask what the attendee has learned as a result of this discussion. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) the next discussion date and time.
2. Remind the attendee of any reading that needs to happen before the final session.

Creatives Talk Experience

Creativity

George Maestri and I were part of a panel discussion for up-and-coming creatives. Years ago I followed George from afar when he authored *Maya at a Glance*. George has been a force in the creative industry for decades. He has worked for companies like Nickelodeon, WB, Comedy Central, MGM, Epic Games, Disney, and LinkedIn to name a few. George was also on the adjunct faculty for CalArts. Now, he has his own company in Los Angeles where he animates, directs, and teaches. George was kind enough to take time out of his schedule to answer some of my questions about staying creative after years of work.

Eric: “How much down time have you built into your schedule for creativity?”

George: “[Laughs] I do creative work full time. No real down time.”

Eric: “Since creativity can be spontaneous, how do you capture notes, thoughts, and creative ideas while at home or out and about during the day?”

George: “I use a combination of physical paper and computer notes. I also have a note-taking app on my phone.”

Eric: “What do you think of neuroplasticity as it relates to expressiveness and staying creative?”

George: “Our brains are absolutely malleable. I think it can be cultivated if you put in the time and practice. It also never ends—you can always learn more, rewire habits, and otherwise improve your mind if you make the effort.”

Eric: “How do you continue to learn today?”

George: “For me, it starts with lots of research and learning in order to understand the new topic, technique, or skill. Then I follow

it up with projects that put it into practice. Until I can do it myself, I don't feel as though I truly understand it. Usually that means doing some personal projects. Or, if I'm bold, professional projects where someone pays me to get up to speed. Professional projects do entail some degree of risk—if I can't learn it in time, I'm kind of screwed. But the pressure usually forces me to learn."

Eric: "Yes, that rings true for me as well. What tools and resources do you use to learn, grow, and stay creative?"

George: "Learning for me looks like books, internet, tutorials, and talks followed by lots of practice. Sometimes I'll take a class or seminar in person when I have the time. I do like in-person classes. I find they can be more motivating. Plus the camaraderie between students can be inspiring."

"To grow, that's more personal. I have a meditation practice which keeps my ego in check and gives me a foundation for personal growth. When I first started meditating seriously many years ago, it profoundly changed my life for the better. I also read books, listen to podcasts, and watch documentaries that can inspire me to do/be better.

"To stay creative, you have to keep challenging yourself to improve as well as *see* and *do* things differently than you have before. You also need to stay out of the ruts, so to speak. If everyone is turning right, maybe make a left, Or go straight up. Or maybe even backwards. Right now in my work, I'm finding realism has become really popular (and thus, boring), so I'm playing with stylization and other ways of viewing things."

Eric: "Do you allow team members to pursue creative interests outside of work?"

George: "If I were managing a team, outside creative stuff is great and encouraged because it all circles back. Creativity in one area adds to creativity in others. That said, when we're on company time, company stuff comes first. Business is business, after all."

Eric: "Yes, it is, and I need to let you get back to business. But I also need to be sure to schedule time for learning and creativity. Thank you so much, George, for your time, experience, and insights."

Topic 37

Remote Work and Creativity

1. How has working remotely impacted you and your team?
2. What would you say are the challenges of working remotely?
3. What would you say are the challenges of creativity in a remote environment?
4. What have you learned from working in a remote environment?
5. How do you prevent fatigue when working in the office or working remotely?
6. How do you stay motivated when working from the office or remotely?
7. How do you set expectations with a remote workforce?
 - a. How does this differ from how you set expectations in an in-person environment?
 - b. Similarly, how does accountability differ between environments?
8. How do you reinforce culture with a remote team?
9. Do you have downtime built into your remote team(s)? What does that look like?
10. Do you have innovation time built into your remote team(s)? What does that look like?

Write your own questions:

Topic 38

The Fun Formula

1. If you are reading *Creatives Lead*®, do you agree with the author that employee retention and productivity increase in a fun environment? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think we have forgotten to have fun at work?
3. Do you enjoy work? Why or why not?
4. How can *forced fun* undermine morale and productivity?
5. How can fun be encouraged and show value within the team?
6. How often do you attend learning events?
 - a. Do you reflect on what you've learned from these events?
 - b. How do you put those reflection thoughts into regular practice?
7. How do you encourage learning and training with the team?
8. How do the team members best retain what they have learned?
9. Where have you seen evidence that your customers are becoming advocates of your products and services?
10. How would your first-time customers describe their experience? How might they feel?

Write your own questions:

Topic 39

Setting Aside Creative Time

1. How familiar are you with the Design Thinking methodology?
2. What value do you see in applying this methodology?
3. How much down time have you built into your schedule?
4. How do you currently capture innovative thoughts, and ideas?
5. Since creative ideas can seem spontaneous, how do you (or can you) capture them while out and about during the day?
6. What do you think of neuroplasticity?
7. How are you continuing to learn today?
 - a. What tools and resources do you use to learn and grow?
8. How are you promoting creativity with the team?
9. Are you allowing team members to pursue creative interests outside of work-related projects? Why or why not?

Write your own questions:

Final Challenge

An Uncommon Journey

The last twelve sessions have flown by. As you have been discussing and applying principles from *Creatives Lead®*, there are likely questions that have come up amongst your leaders. Never fear. I think you will find that as you help form healthy leaders on the team, they will know what to do in different circumstances.

Final topics for discussion:

- Leadership Lessons from Leonidas
- Taking the Next Step



Set the Stage

Final Challenge: Pre-Read



Discussion Goals

As you wrap up, be aware of driving the discussion toward these final goals. Leaders need to understand:

- Not everyone is cut out for leadership. And that is okay.
- Applying what you learn in a fun way is the formula to retention and success.
- Common sense, unfortunately, is not all that common.
- Staying accountable helps you with blind spots related to both character and competency.



Setting the Tone

You can read the experience interview below that aligns with the topic or tell your own story. This is a time to be open and transparent. Storytelling is a way to set the tone and energy for the discussion.

- Read or tell a story.
- Start the discussion.
- Use accountability to challenge attendees.
- Set expectations for moving forward.



Accountability for New Leaders

1. What have you learned over these weeks together?
2. What do you feel are the top three things to apply from these discussions?
3. Who is holding you accountable for your leadership character and competencies?

4. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, did you take the *Creatives Lead Quarterly Growth Indicator*®? If so, how did you score?



Accountability for Leaders in Training

1. What have you learned over these weeks together?
2. What do you feel are the top three things to apply from these discussions?
3. Who is holding you accountable for your character and competencies?
4. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, did you take the *Creatives Lead Quarterly Growth Indicator*®? If so, how did you score?



Wrap-Up and Final Challenges

Confirm learning and application points. Ask if there are any final comments the attendee has as a result of these discussions. What will they put into practice and when?

1. Set up (or confirm) an accountability check-up date and time for each attendee.
2. Remind them of the path they have started down by all the work they have put into these discussions.
3. Encourage them to be diligent and intentional about learning, growing, and staying healthy physically, mentally, and emotionally.
4. Challenge them to set aside time regularly, for personal reflection and journaling.
5. Challenge them to enlist in some form of ongoing mentoring or coaching relationship.
6. Challenge them to stay creative in all they do!

Creatives Talk Experience

Final Challenge

Dear leader, I reserved the last story for myself. I realize, with fear and trembling, that what I leave you with is of profound importance. It is important to me because, although I haven't met you, I honestly care about you and I want to see you succeed. I would not put my thoughts and experiences out into the world if not for the fact that *you matter*.

As such, I want to spare you pain but realize I cannot (and should not) do that. My experiences have shown pain to be a life-changing instructor. So, with all sincerity I say, leadership is not for everyone. As my good friend Julie says, "Make sure you *want* to lead people. It is a sometimes thankless job, a rewarding job, a difficult job, and a relentless job."

You have been through twelve weeks of engaging and deep discussions. I hope you have learned a lot about yourself. Leadership is more about who you are than what you do. As a creative, I hope you approach all that you do in leadership (and life) in a fun way. Always stay curious. Always be a learner.

As I moved into leadership, I had a knack for connecting work, thoughts, and ideas. To me it was common sense. I have come to learn that not everyone shares that sense. I distinctly remember being in a senior leadership meeting and problem-solving with our executive team. After hearing from many in the room, I saw some connecting points. I threw out an idea, and everyone looked at me with blank stares. After twenty more minutes of conversation, another executive voiced what I had thrown out earlier. It was like a light bulb went on in everyone's head. I remember leaning over to our COO and saying, "Didn't I say that twenty minutes ago?" To which he responded, and I will never forget, "Yeah, it just took them twenty minutes to get it." I share that to say, don't be discouraged when others do not get your thoughts and ideas. Creative right-brainers see the

world differently and make connections quickly that others do not see. Don't let it frustrate or embarrass you. Keep putting your thoughts and ideas out there—we need you to do that!

Finally, I want to leave you with this challenge: stay accountable related to both your character and competency. One leaks into the other.

When I first started my leadership journey, I latched onto like-minded leaders who wanted to grow, learn, and keep each other accountable. We began meeting for breakfast once a week. Soon after, we started reading leadership books in order to discuss and apply the principles we felt were practical and applicable and not some gimmick cooked up by a wannabe leadership guru. This was a time where my leadership competency grew by leaps and bounds. Contrast this with a previous opportunity I had in leadership where I felt very incompetent. My thoughts and ideas were questioned, and that impacted my character. I became insular and felt I needed to protect my role and my ego. My competency leaked into my character. I am so glad I got past that with some great coaching.

I have struggled in the past with acceptance. This has led to a desire to please others in order to gain a level of their acceptance. Do you see where this is going? My character issue, desiring acceptance, impacted my competency. I second-guessed myself. I felt like I was not up to the job. All of these things were based on feelings. While feelings are important and something to be acknowledged, we should not always take the advice of Obi-Wan Kenobi and “trust our feelings.” Instead of doing what I thought would please others, I did the right thing by forfeiting what was popular. Sometimes that meant not taking a long lunch because I needed to get work done. Other times that meant not going out with the “work gang” because I had other commitments. These were character choices, yet they drove my competence as a leader. It was not easy and I messed up a lot of times. Yet, I learned investing in your character will always bring a high ROI on your competency and leadership.

My encouragement to you—be genuine, be caring, be a communicator, be creative, be curious, and honest with yourself and others. After all, this is what you are looking for in a leader. This is what your team needs as a leader. This is the kind of leader you want to be.

Topic 40

Leadership Lessons from Leonidas

1. If reading *Creatives Lead*®, why do you think the author included the comparison between Leonidas and leaders today?
 - a. Did you find the comparison challenging? Why/why not?
 - b. Did you find the comparison inspiring? Why/why not?
 - c. What stood out in this comparison, from your perspective?
 - d. Is this a vision of leadership you could aspire to? Why/why not?
 - e. What would you think if your leader behaved as described?
 - f. Why or why not follow a leader with these qualities?

Write your own questions:

Handwriting practice lines consisting of five horizontal lines: a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line, with two blank lines above and below the primary set.

Wrap Up

Taking the Next Step

1. If you read *Creatives Lead*®, do you agree with the author that most of these principles are common sense?
 - a. Why is common sense not very common?
 - b. If these principles are common, why do you think they are not often taught or put into practice?
2. Did you take the final assessment? If so, how did you score?
 - a. What do you plan to improve upon first?
 - b. How will you implement this next step?
3. Of the principles and practices that we've discussed, which have impacted you the most? Why?
4. How has our time going through this material impacted you as a leader?
5. How have your ideas about leadership changed through the course of these discussions?
6. As a result of this material, what do you plan to do next?

Write your own questions:

Notes:

About The Author

Eric H. Brown is passionate about next-generation leaders. Having been in leadership for almost three decades, he is ardent about helping creatives transition from individual contributors to leaders. Because creativity is a major differentiator in today's corporate landscape, he believes that more creatives should sit in leadership positions.

As the owner of a design boutique, Eric consulted for brands across the U.S., including Rockwell Collins, Hilton Hotels, Chick-fil-A, CDC Software, Sea Ray Boats, GeoLearning, and Lucent Technologies. He's been honored to be both a featured conference speaker and moderator. He's also the author of *Creatives Lead*®, the *Creatives Lead Companion Workbook*®, and *Creatives Talk Experience*®. You'll find more of Eric's written work on leadership and creativity on his blog at creativeslead.com.

Work and life have taken Eric from coast to coast of the U.S., landing him in the Southeast, where he lives with his family today. He loves the balance he finds here; he and his family enjoy the fast pace of city life, the beauty of the mountains, and the serenity of the beach. Eric's passion to learn extends beyond his vocation. He has varied interests in music, cuisine, reading, writing, percussion, and painting.

Visit creativeslead.com to learn about more creative resources, and be sure to leave Eric a note. He would love to hear from you.

