



Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win

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Authors' Bio: JOCKO WILLINK and LEIF BABIN served as U.S. Navy SEAL officers in SEAL Task Unit Bruiser through the Battle of Ramadi, some of the toughest urban combat in the history of the SEAL teams. Their task unit remains the most highly decorated special operations unit from the war in Iraq. After returning, Babin and Willink built and led Navy SEAL leadership training for the next generation of SEALs. Then they took those lessons learned from the battlefield and launched Echelon Front, a leadership consulting firm that teaches others to build and lead their own high-performance winning teams.

Authors' big thought:

The book derives its title from the underlying principle— the mind-set— that provides the foundation for all the rest: **Extreme Ownership**. Leaders must own everything in their world. There is no one else to blame.

Introduction

- SEALs, operate as a team of high-caliber, multitalented individuals who have been through perhaps the toughest military training and most rigorous screening process anywhere. But in the SEAL program, it is all about the Team. The sum is far greater than the parts.
- This book describes SEAL combat operations and training through the eyes of the authors, and applies their experience to leadership and management practices in the business world. The combat scenarios describe how they confronted obstacles as a team and overcame their challenges together. There can be no leadership where there is no team.

- Jocko and Leif wrote this book so that the leadership lessons can continue to impact teams beyond the battlefield in all leadership situations— any company, team, or organization in which a group of people strives to achieve a goal and accomplish a mission.
- It is for leaders everywhere to utilize the principles learned to lead and win. Leadership requires belief in the mission and unyielding perseverance to achieve victory, particularly when doubters question whether victory is even possible.
- The idea for this book was born from the realization that the principles critical to SEAL success on the battlefield— how SEALs train and prepare their leaders, how they mold and develop high-performance teams, and how they lead in combat— are directly applicable to success in any group, organization, corporation, business, and, to a broader degree, life.
- This book provides the reader with their formula for success: the mind-set and guiding principles that enable SEAL leaders and combat units to achieve extraordinary results. It demonstrates how to apply these directly in business and life to likewise achieve victory.
- The only meaningful measure for a leader is whether the team succeeds or fails. For all the definitions, descriptions, and characterizations of leaders, there are only two that matter: effective and ineffective. Effective leaders lead successful teams that accomplish their mission and win. Ineffective leaders do not.
- For leaders, the humility to admit and own mistakes and develop a plan to overcome them is essential to success. The best leaders are not driven by ego or personal agendas. They are simply focused on the mission and how best to accomplish it.
- U.S. military personnel are smart, creative, freethinking individuals— human beings. They must literally risk life and limb to accomplish the mission. For this reason, they must believe in the cause for which they are fighting. They must believe in the plan they are asked to execute, and most important, they must believe in and trust the leader they are asked to follow. This is especially true in the SEAL Teams, where innovation and input from everyone (including the most junior personnel) are encouraged.

Part 1: Winning the War Within

Chapter 1: Extreme Ownership

- On any team, in any organization, all responsibility for success and failure rests with the leader. The leader must own everything in his or her world. There is no one else to blame. The leader must acknowledge mistakes and admit failures, take ownership of them, and develop a plan to win. The best leaders don't just take responsibility for their job. They take Extreme Ownership of everything that impacts their mission. This fundamental core concept enables SEAL leaders to lead high-performing teams in extraordinary circumstances and win.
- Extreme Ownership isn't a principle whose application is limited to the battlefield. This concept is the number-one characteristic of any high-performance winning team, in any military unit, organization, sports team or business team in any industry.
- If an individual on the team is not performing at the level required for the team to succeed, the leader must train and mentor that underperformer. But if the underperformer continually fails to meet standards, then a leader who exercises Extreme Ownership must be loyal to the team and the mission above any individual. If underperformers cannot improve, the leader must

make the tough call to terminate them and hire others who can get the job done. It is all on the leader.

Chapter 2: No Bad Teams, Only Bad leaders

- This is one of the most fundamental and important truths at the heart of Extreme Ownership: there are no bad teams, only bad leaders.
- This is a difficult and humbling concept for any leader to accept. But it is an essential mind-set to building a high-performance, winning team.
- When leaders who epitomize Extreme Ownership drive their teams to achieve, a team performs well, and performance continues to improve, even when a strong leader is temporarily removed from the team.
- Every team must have junior leaders ready to step up and temporarily take on roles and responsibilities for their immediate bosses to carry on the team's mission and get the job done if and when the need arises.
- Leaders should never be satisfied. They must always strive to improve, and they must face the facts through a realistic, brutally honest assessment of themselves and their team's performance.
- Identifying weaknesses, good leaders seek to strengthen them and come up with a plan to overcome challenges. The best teams are constantly looking to improve, add capability, and push the standards higher. It starts with the individual and spreads to each of the team members until this becomes the culture, the new standard.
- The recognition that there are no bad teams, only bad leaders facilitates Extreme Ownership and enables leaders to build high-performance teams that dominate on any battlefield, literal or figurative.

Chapter 3: Believe

- In order to convince and inspire others to follow and accomplish a mission, a leader must be a true believer in the mission. If a leader does not believe, he or she will not take the risks required to overcome the inevitable challenges necessary to win. And they will not be able to convince others, especially the frontline team who must execute the mission, to do so.
- Leaders must always operate with the understanding that they are part of something greater than themselves and their own personal interests.
- They must impart this understanding to their teams down to the tactical-level operators on the ground. Far more important than training or equipment, a resolute belief in the mission is critical for any team or organization to win and achieve big results.
- In many cases the leader must align his thoughts and vision to that of the mission. Actions and words reflect belief with a clear confidence that is not possible when belief is in doubt.
- The challenge comes when that alignment isn't explicitly clear. When a leader's confidence breaks, those who are supposed to follow him or her see this and begin to question their own belief in the mission.
- Every leader must be able to detach from the immediate tactical mission and understand how it fits into strategic goals. Leaders must analyze the strategic picture, and then come to a conclusion. If they cannot determine a satisfactory answer themselves, they must ask questions

up the chain of command until they understand why. If frontline leaders understand why, they can move forward, fully believing in what they are doing.

- The frontline troops never have as clear an understanding of the strategic picture as senior leaders might anticipate. It is critical that these senior leaders impart a general understanding of that strategic knowledge – the *why* – to their troops.
- In any organization, goals must always be in alignment. If goals aren't aligned at some level, this issue must be addressed and rectified. In business just as in the military, no senior executive team would knowingly choose a course of action or issue an order that would purposely result in failure. But a subordinate may not understand a certain strategy and thus not believe in it.
- Junior leaders must ask questions and also provide feedback up the chain so that senior leaders can fully understand the ramifications of how strategic plans affect execution on the ground.

Chapter 4: Check the Ego

- Ego clouds and disrupts everything: the planning process, the ability to take good advice, and the ability to accept constructive criticism. It can even stifle someone's sense of self-preservation. Often, the most difficult ego to deal with is your own.
- Everyone has an ego. Ego drives the most successful people in life— in the SEAL Teams, in the military, in the business world. They want to win, to be the best. That is good. But when ego clouds our judgment and prevents us from seeing the world as it is, then ego becomes destructive.
- When personal agendas become more important than the team and the overarching mission's success, performance suffers and failure ensues. Many of the disruptive issues that arise within any team can be attributed directly to a problem with ego.
- Implementing Extreme Ownership requires checking your ego and operating with a high degree of humility. Admitting mistakes, taking ownership, and developing a plan to overcome challenges are integral to any successful team.
- Ego can prevent a leader from conducting an honest, realistic assessment of his or her own performance and the performance of the team.

Part 11: Laws of Combat

Chapter 5: Cover and Move

- Cover and Move: it is the most fundamental tactic, perhaps the only tactic. Put simply, Cover and Move means teamwork.
- All elements within the greater team are crucial and must work together to accomplish the mission, mutually supporting one another for that singular purpose.
- Departments and groups within the team must break down silos, depend on each other and understand who depends on them. If they forsake this principle and operate independently or work against each other, the results can be catastrophic to the overall team's performance.
- Within any team, there are divisions that arise. Often, when smaller teams within the team get so focused on their immediate tasks, they forget about what others are doing or how they depend on other teams. They may start to compete with one another, and when there are obstacles, animosity and blame develops. This creates friction that inhibits the overall team's performance.

- It falls on leaders to continually keep perspective on the strategic mission and remind the team that they are part of the greater team and the strategic mission is paramount. Each member of the team is critical to success, though the main effort and supporting efforts must be clearly identified.
- If the overall team fails, everyone fails, even if a specific member or an element within the team did their job successfully. Pointing fingers and placing blame on others contributes to further dissension between teams and individuals. These individuals and teams must instead find a way to work together, communicate with each other, and mutually support one another.
- The focus must always be on how to best accomplish the mission. Alternatively, when the team succeeds, everyone within and supporting that team succeeds. Every individual and every team within the larger team gets to share in the success.
- Accomplishing the strategic mission is the highest priority. Team members, departments, and supporting assets must always Cover and Move— help each other, work together, and support each other to win. This principle is integral for any team to achieve victory.

Chapter 6: Simple

- Combat, like anything in life, has inherent layers of complexities. Simplifying as much as possible is crucial to success.
- When plans and orders are too complicated, people may not understand them. And when things go wrong, and they inevitably do go wrong, complexity compounds issues that can spiral out of control into total disaster.
- Plans and orders must be communicated in a manner that is simple, clear, and concise.
- Everyone that is part of the mission must know and understand his or her role in the mission and what to do in the event of likely contingencies.
- As a leader, it doesn't matter how well you feel you have presented the information or communicated an order, plan, tactic, or strategy. If your team doesn't get it, you have not kept things simple and you have failed. You must brief to ensure the lowest common denominator on the team understands.
- It is critical, as well, that the operating relationship facilitate the ability of the frontline troops to ask questions that clarify when they do not understand the mission or key tasks to be performed. Leaders must encourage this communication and take the time to explain so that every member of the team understands.
- Simple: this principle isn't limited to the battlefield. In the business world, and in life, there are inherent complexities. It is critical to keep plans and communication simple. Following this rule is crucial to the success of any team in any combat, business or life.

Chapter 7: Prioritize and Execute

- On the battlefield, countless problems compound in a snowball effect, every challenge complex in its own right, each demanding attention. But a leader must remain calm and make the best decisions possible. To do this, SEAL combat leaders utilize Prioritize and Execute.
- This principle is verbalized with this direction: "Relax, look around, make a call." Even the most competent of leaders can be overwhelmed if they try to tackle multiple problems or a number of tasks simultaneously. The team will likely fail at each of those tasks.

- Instead, leaders must determine the highest priority task and execute. When overwhelmed, fall back upon this principle: Prioritize and Execute.
- Multiple problems and high-pressure, high-stakes environments occur in many facets of life and particularly in business. Business decisions may lack the immediacy of life and death, but the pressures on business leaders are still intense. The success or failure of the team, the department, the company, the financial capital of investors, careers, and livelihoods are at stake. These pressures produce stress and demand decisions that often require rapid execution. Such decision making for leaders can be overwhelming.
- A particularly effective means to help Prioritize and Execute under pressure is to stay at least a step or two ahead of real-time problems. Through careful contingency planning, a leader can anticipate likely challenges that could arise during execution and map out an effective response to those challenges before they happen. That leader and his or her team are far more likely to win.
- Staying ahead of the curve prevents a leader from being overwhelmed when pressure is applied and enables greater decisiveness. If the team has been briefed and understands what actions to take through such likely contingencies, the team can then rapidly reprioritize efforts and rapidly adapt to a constantly changing battlefield.
- To implement Prioritize and Execute in any business, team, or organization, a leader must:
 - evaluate the highest priority problem.
 - lay out in simple, clear, and concise terms the highest priority effort for your team.
 - develop and determine a solution, seek input from key leaders and from the team where possible.
 - direct the execution of that solution, focusing all efforts and resources toward this priority task.
 - move on to the next highest priority problem. Repeat.
 - when priorities shift within the team, pass situational awareness both up and down the chain.
 - don't let the focus on one priority cause target fixation. Maintain the ability to see other problems developing and rapidly shift as needed.

Chapter 8: Decentralized Command

- Human beings are generally not capable of managing more than six to ten people, particularly when things go sideways and inevitable contingencies arise.
- Teams must be broken down into manageable elements of four to five operators, with a clearly designated leader. Those leaders must understand the overall mission, and the ultimate goal of that mission.
- Junior leaders must be empowered to make decisions on key tasks necessary to accomplish that mission in the most effective and efficient manner possible.
- Teams within teams are organized for maximum effectiveness for a particular mission, with leaders who have clearly delineated responsibilities.
- Every tactical-level team leader must understand not just what to do but why they are doing it.
- If frontline leaders do not understand why, they must ask their boss to clarify the why. Decentralized Command does not mean junior leaders or team members operate on their own program; that results in chaos. Instead, junior leaders must fully understand what is within their

decision-making authority— the “left and right limits” of their responsibility. Additionally, they must communicate with senior leaders to recommend decisions outside their authority and pass critical information up the chain so the senior leadership can make informed strategic decisions.

- Junior leaders must be proactive rather than reactive.
- To be effectively empowered to make decisions, it is imperative that frontline leaders execute with confidence. Tactical leaders must be confident that they clearly understand the strategic mission and the Intent. They must have implicit trust that their senior leaders will back their decisions. Without this trust, junior leaders cannot confidently execute, which means they cannot exercise effective Decentralized Command.
- To ensure this is the case, senior leaders must constantly communicate and push information to their subordinate leaders. Likewise, junior leaders must push situational awareness up the chain to their senior leaders to keep them informed, particularly of crucial information that affects strategic decision making.
- There are leaders who try to take on too much themselves. When this occurs, operations can quickly dissolve into chaos. The fix is to empower frontline leaders through Decentralized Command and ensure they are running their teams to support the overall mission, without micromanagement from the top.
- There are, likewise, other senior leaders who are so far removed from the troops executing on the frontline that they become ineffective. These leaders might give the appearance of control, but they actually have no idea what their troops are doing and cannot effectively direct their teams. SEAL teams call this trait “battlefield aloofness.” This attitude creates a significant disconnect between leadership and the troops, and such a leader’s team will struggle to effectively accomplish their mission.
- Determining how much leaders should be involved and where leaders can best position themselves to command and control the team is key.
- Contrary to a common misconception, leaders are not stuck in any particular position. Leaders must be free to move to where they are most needed, which changes throughout the course of an operation.
- Understanding proper positioning as a leader is a key component of effective Decentralized Command. Effectiveness of Decentralized Command is critical to the success of any team in any industry. In chaotic, dynamic, and rapidly changing environments, leaders at all levels must be empowered to make decisions. Decentralized Command is a key component to victory.

Chapter 9: Plan

- What’s the mission? Planning begins with mission analysis. Leaders must identify clear directives for the team. Once they themselves understand the mission, they can impart this knowledge to their key leaders and frontline troops tasked with executing the mission.
- A broad and ambiguous mission results in lack of focus, ineffective execution, and mission creep. To prevent this, the mission must be carefully refined and simplified so that it is explicitly clear and specifically focused to achieve the greater strategic vision for which that mission is a part.
- The mission must explain the overall purpose and desired result, or “end state,” of the operation. The frontline troops tasked with executing the mission must understand the deeper

purpose behind the mission. A simple statement, the Commander's Intent, is actually the most important part of the brief. When understood by everyone involved in the execution of the plan, it guides each decision and action on the ground.

- Different courses of action must be explored on how best to accomplish the mission— with the manpower, resources, and supporting assets available. Once a course of action is determined, further planning requires detailed information gathering in order to facilitate the development of a thorough plan. It is critical to utilize all assets and lean on the expertise of those in the best position to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information.
- Leaders must delegate the planning process down the chain as much as possible to key subordinate leaders. Team leaders within the greater team and frontline, tactical level leaders must have ownership of their tasks within the overall plan and mission.
- Team participation— even from the most junior personnel— is critical in developing bold, innovative solutions to problem sets. Giving the frontline troops ownership of even a small piece of the plan gives them buy-in, helps them understand the reasons behind the plan, and better enables them to believe in the mission, which translates to far more effective implementation and execution on the ground.
- While the senior leader supervises the entire planning process by team members, he or she must be careful not to get bogged down in the details. By maintaining a perspective above the micro-terrain of the plan, the senior leader can better ensure compliance with strategic objectives. Doing so enables senior leaders to “stand back and be the tactical genius” — to identify weaknesses or holes in the plan that those immersed in the details might have missed. This enables leaders to fill in those gaps before execution.
- Once the detailed plan has been developed, it must then be briefed to the entire team and all participants and supporting elements. Leaders must carefully prioritize the information to be presented in as simple, clear, and concise a format as possible so that participants do not experience information overload.
- The planning process and briefing must be a forum that encourages discussion, questions, and clarification from even the most junior personnel. If frontline troops are unclear about the plan and yet are too intimidated to ask questions, the team's ability to effectively execute the plan radically decreases. Thus, leaders must ask questions of their troops, encourage interaction, and ensure their teams understand the plan.
- Following a successful brief, all members participating in an operation will understand the strategic mission, the Commander's Intent, the specific mission of the team, and their individual roles within that mission. They will understand contingencies— likely challenges that might arise and how to respond.
- The test for a successful brief is simple: Do the team and the supporting elements understand it?
- The plan must mitigate identified risks where possible. SEALs are known for taking significant risk, but in reality SEALs calculate risk very carefully. A good plan must enable the highest chance of mission success while mitigating as much risk as possible.
- There are some risks that simply cannot be mitigated, and leaders must instead focus on those risks that actually can be controlled.

- Detailed contingency plans help manage risk because everyone involved in the direct execution (or in support) of the operation understands what to do when obstacles arise or things go wrong. Leaders must be comfortable accepting some level of risk.
- The best teams employ constant analysis of their tactics and measure their effectiveness so that they can adapt their methods and implement lessons learned for future missions. Often business teams claim there isn't time for such analysis. But one must make time. The best SEAL units, after each combat operation, conduct what we called a "post-operational debrief." No matter how exhausted from an operation or how busy planning for the next mission, time is made for this debrief because lives and future mission success depend on it.
- A post-operational debrief examines all phases of an operation from planning through execution, in a concise format. It addresses the following for the combat mission just completed: What went right? What went wrong? How can we adapt our tactics to make us even more effective and increase our advantage over the enemy?
- It is critical for the success of any team in business to do the same and implement those changes into their future plans so that they don't repeat the same mistakes.
- While businesses can have their own planning process, it must be standardized so that other departments within the company and supporting assets outside the company (such as service contractors or subsidiary companies) can understand and use the same format and terminology. It must be repeatable and guide users with a checklist of all the important things they need to think about. The plan must be briefed to the participants, geared toward the frontline troops charged with execution so they clearly understand it. Implementing such a planning process will ensure the highest level of performance and give the team the greatest chance to accomplish the mission and win.
- A leader's checklist for planning should include the following:
 - Analyze the mission.
 - Understand the mission, intent and end-state (the goal).
 - Identify and state your own Commander's Intent and end-state for the specific mission.
 - Identify personnel, assets, resources, and time available.
 - Decentralize the planning process. —Empower key leaders within the team to analyze possible courses of action.
 - Determine a specific course of action. —Lean toward selecting the simplest course of action. —Focus efforts on the best course of action.
 - Empower key leaders to develop the plan for the selected course of action. • Plan for likely contingencies through each phase of the operation.
 - Mitigate risks that can be controlled as much as possible.
 - Delegate portions of the plan and brief to key junior leaders. —Stand back and be the tactical genius.
 - Continually check and question the plan against emerging information to ensure it still fits the situation.
 - Brief the plan to all participants and supporting assets. —Emphasize Commander's Intent. —Ask questions and engage in discussion and interaction with the team to ensure they understand.
 - Conduct post-operational debrief after execution. —Analyze lessons learned and implement them in future planning.

Chapter 10. Leading Up and Down the Chain of Command

LEADING DOWN THE CHAIN-

- Any good leader is immersed in the planning and execution of tasks, projects, and operations to move the team toward a strategic goal. Such leaders possess insight into the bigger picture and why specific tasks need to be accomplished.
- This information does not automatically translate to subordinate leaders and the frontline troops.
- Junior members of the team— the tactical level operators— are rightly focused on their specific jobs. They must be in order to accomplish the tactical mission. They do not need the full knowledge and insight of their senior leaders, nor do the senior leaders need the intricate understanding of the tactical level operators' jobs. Still, it is critical that each have an understanding of the other's role.
- It is paramount that senior leaders explain to their junior leaders and troops executing the mission how their role contributes to big picture success. This is not intuitive and never as obvious to the rank-and-file employees as leaders might assume.
- Leaders must routinely communicate with their team members to help them understand their role in the overall mission. Frontline leaders and troops can then connect the dots between what they do every day— the day-to-day operations— and how that impacts the company's strategic goals. This understanding helps the team members prioritize their efforts in a rapidly changing, dynamic environment. That is leading down the chain of command. It requires regularly stepping out of the office and personally engaging in face-to-face conversations with direct reports and observing the frontline troops in action to understand their particular challenges and read them into the Commander's intent. This enables the team to understand why they are doing what they are doing, which facilitates Decentralized Command.
- As a leader employing Extreme Ownership, if your team isn't doing what you need them to do, you first have to look at yourself. Rather than blame them for not seeing the strategic picture, you must figure out a way to better communicate it to them in terms that are simple, clear, and concise, so that they understand. This is what leading down the chain of command is all about.

LEADING UP THE CHAIN-

- If your boss isn't making a decision in a timely manner or providing necessary support for you and your team, don't blame the boss. First, blame yourself.
- Examine what you can do to better convey the critical information for decisions to be made and support allocated.
- Leading up the chain of command requires tactful engagement with the immediate boss (or in military terms, higher headquarters) to obtain the decisions and support necessary to enable your team to accomplish its mission and ultimately win. To do this, a leader must push situational awareness up the chain of command. Leading up the chain takes much more savvy and skill than leading down the chain.
- Leading up, the leader cannot fall back on his or her positional authority. Instead, the subordinate leader must use influence, experience, knowledge, communication, and maintain the highest professionalism.
- While pushing to make your superior understand what you need, you must also realize that your boss must allocate limited assets and make decisions with the bigger picture in mind. You

and your team may not represent the priority effort at that particular time. Or perhaps the senior leadership has chosen a different direction. Have the humility to understand and accept this.

- One of the most important jobs of any leader is to support your own boss— your immediate leadership. In any chain of command, the leadership must always present a united front to the troops. A public display of discontent or disagreement with the chain of command undermines the authority of leaders at all levels. This is catastrophic to the performance of any organization.
- As a leader, if you don't understand why decisions are being made, requests denied, or support allocated elsewhere, you must ask those questions up the chain. Then, once understood, you can pass that understanding down to your team.
- Leaders in any chain of command will not always agree. But at the end of the day, once the debate on a particular course of action is over and the boss has made a decision— even if that decision is one you argued against— you must execute the plan as if it were your own.
- When leading up the chain of command, use caution and respect. But remember, if your leader is not giving the support you need, don't blame him or her. Instead, reexamine what you can do to better clarify, educate, influence, or convince that person to give you what you need in order to win.
- The major factors to be aware of when leading up and down the chain of command are these:
 - Take responsibility for leading everyone in your world, subordinates and superiors alike.
 - If someone isn't doing what you want or need them to do, look in the mirror first and determine what you can do to better enable this.
 - Don't ask your leader what you should do; tell them what you are going to do.

Chapter 11: Decisiveness and Uncertainty

- Combat leaders must contend with the pressure from uncertainty, chaos, and the unknown. The combat leader almost never has the full picture or a clear and certain understanding of the enemy's actions or reactions, nor even the knowledge of the immediate consequences for momentary decisions.
- On the battlefield, for those immersed in the action, the first recognition of an attack might be the wicked snap and violent impact of incoming rounds, flying shards of concrete and debris, or the screams of pain from wounded comrades.
- Urgent questions arise: Where are they shooting from? How many are there? Are any of my men wounded? If so, how badly? Where are other friendly forces? Is it possible they are friendly forces mistakenly shooting at us? The answers are almost never immediately obvious. In some cases, the answers to who attacked and how will never be known.
- Regardless, leaders cannot be paralyzed by fear. That results in inaction. It is critical for leaders to act decisively amid uncertainty; to make the best decisions they can base on only the immediate information available. There is no 100 percent right solution. The picture is never complete. Leaders must be comfortable with this and be able to make decisions promptly, and then be ready to adjust those decisions quickly based on evolving situations and new information.
- Intelligence gathering and research are important, but they must be employed with realistic expectations and must not impede swift decision making that is often the difference between

victory and defeat. Waiting for the 100 percent right and certain solution leads to delay, indecision, and an inability to execute.

- Leaders must be prepared to make an educated guess based on previous experience, knowledge of how the enemy operates, likely outcomes, and whatever intelligence is available in the immediate moment.
- This “incomplete picture” principle is not unique to combat. It applies to virtually every aspect of our individual lives, such as personal health-care decisions or whether or not to evacuate from the predicted path of a major storm. It particularly applies to leadership and decision making in business.
- While business leaders may not generally face life or death situations, they are certainly under intense pressure. With capital at risk, markets in flux, and competitors actively working to outmaneuver opponents, professional careers and paychecks are at stake. Outcomes are never certain; success never guaranteed. Even so, business leaders must be comfortable in the chaos and act decisively amid such uncertainty.

Chapter 12. Discipline Equals Freedom – The Dichotomy

- Every leader must walk a fine line. That’s what makes leadership so challenging. Just as discipline and freedom are opposing forces that must be balanced, leadership requires finding the equilibrium in the dichotomy of many seemingly contradictory qualities, between one extreme and another. The simple recognition of this is one of the most powerful tools a leader has.
- With this in mind, a leader can more easily balance the opposing forces and lead with maximum effectiveness. A leader must lead but also be ready to follow. Sometimes, another member of the team— perhaps a subordinate or direct report— might be in a better position to develop a plan, make a decision, or lead through a specific situation. Perhaps the junior person has greater expertise in a particular area or more experience. Perhaps he or she simply thought of a better way to accomplish the mission. Good leaders must welcome this, putting aside ego and personal agendas to ensure that the team has the greatest chance of accomplishing its strategic goals.
- A true leader is not intimidated when others step up and take charge.
- Leaders that lack confidence in themselves fear being outshined by someone else. If the team is successful, then recognition will come for those in charge, but a leader should not seek that recognition.
- A leader must be confident to follow someone else when the situation calls for it.
- A leader must be aggressive but not overbearing.
- A leader must be calm but not robotic. It is normal— and necessary— to show emotion.
- The team must understand that their leader cares about them and their well-being. But, a leader must control his or her emotions. If not, how can they expect to control anything else?
- Leaders who lose their temper also lose respect. But, at the same time, to never show any sense of anger, sadness, or frustration would make that leader appear void of any emotion at all— a robot. People do not follow robots.
- Of course, a leader must be confident but never cocky. Confidence is contagious, a great attribute for a leader and a team. But when it goes too far, overconfidence causes complacency and arrogance, which ultimately set the team up for failure.

- A leader must be brave but not foolhardy. He or she must be willing to accept risk and act courageously, but must never be reckless. It is a leader's job to always mitigate as much as possible those risks that can be controlled to accomplish the mission without sacrificing the team or excessively expending critical resources.
- Leaders must have a competitive spirit but also be gracious losers. They must drive competition and push themselves and their teams to perform at the highest level. But they must never put their own drive for personal success ahead of overall mission success for the greater team.
- Leaders must act with professionalism and recognize others for their contributions.
- A leader must be attentive to details but not obsessed by them. A good leader does not get bogged down in the minutia of a tactical problem at the expense of strategic success.
- He or she must monitor and check the team's progress in the most critical tasks. But that leader cannot get sucked into the details and lose track of the bigger picture.
- A leader must be strong but likewise have endurance, not only physically but mentally. He or she must maintain the ability to perform at the highest level and sustain that level for the long term.
- Leaders must recognize limitations and know to pace themselves and their teams so that they can maintain a solid performance indefinitely.
- Leaders must be humble but not passive; quiet but not silent. They must possess humility and the ability to control their ego and listen to others. They must admit mistakes and failures, take ownership of them, and figure out a way to prevent them from happening again.
- But a leader must be able to speak up when it matters. They must be able to stand up for the team and respectfully push back against a decision, order, or direction that could negatively impact overall mission success.
- A leader must be close with subordinates but not too close. The best leaders understand the motivations of their team members and know their people— their lives and their families. But a leader must never grow so close to subordinates that one member of the team becomes more important than another, or more important than the mission itself. Leaders must never get so close that the team forgets who is in charge.
- A leader must exercise Extreme Ownership. Simultaneously, that leader must employ Decentralized Command by giving control to subordinate leaders.
- Finally, a leader has nothing to prove but everything to prove. By virtue of rank and position, the team understands that the leader is in charge. A good leader does not gloat or revel in his or her position. To take charge of minute details just to demonstrate and reinforce to the team a leader's authority is the mark of poor, inexperienced leadership lacking in confidence. Since the team understands that the leader is de facto in charge, in that respect, a leader has nothing to prove. But in another respect, a leader has everything to prove: every member of the team must develop the trust and confidence that their leader will exercise good judgment, remain calm, and make the right decisions when it matters most.
- Leaders must earn that respect and prove themselves worthy, demonstrating through action that they will take care of the team and look out for their long-term interests and well-being. In that respect, a leader has everything to prove every day.
- Beyond this, there are countless other leadership dichotomies that must be carefully balanced. Generally, when a leader struggles, the root cause behind the problem is that the leader has

leaned too far in one direction and steered off course. Awareness of the dichotomies in leadership allows this discovery, and thereby enables the correction.

The Dichotomy of Leadership

- A good leader must be:
 - confident but not cocky;
 - courageous but not foolhardy;
 - competitive but a gracious loser;
 - attentive to details but not obsessed by them;
 - strong but have endurance;
 - a leader and follower;
 - humble not passive;
 - aggressive not overbearing;
 - quiet not silent;
 - calm but not robotic, logical but not devoid of emotions;
 - close with the troops but not so close that one becomes more important than another or more important than the good of the team; not so close that they forget who is in charge.
 - able to execute Extreme Ownership, while exercising Decentralized Command.
- A good leader has nothing to prove, but everything to prove.

Afterword

Extreme Ownership is a mind-set, an attitude. If leaders exhibit Extreme Ownership and develop a culture of Extreme Ownership within their teams and organizations, the rest falls into place. Soon, a leader no longer needs to be involved in the minor details of decisions but can look up and out to focus on the strategic mission as the team handles the tactical battles.

Recommendation: This is an exceptional leadership book. While the principles have been captured in this summary, the battle stories have not. They are vivid and worth reading. The stories of how these principles are applied in business is also absent from this summary. The summary is merely meant to whet your appetite to read or listen to the entire book. I encourage that!

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Dr. Frumi Rachel Barr is truly an entrepreneur having started and run 5 entrepreneurial adventures prior to following her passion for guiding the success of CEOs and their teams to Scale Up.

Money and a plan don't guarantee execution

Execution depends on communication, cascading priorities throughout the organization and an external guide that holds the team accountable and keeps the momentum going. Lots of companies know **what** to do – it's the **doing** that needs an external guide. That's what we provide. We use the best systems on the planet, Gazelles and the Rockefeller Habits, as well as software to track team initiatives and progress and drive the team to play to win!

Dr. Frumi's "Why" is to create a safe place for leaders and teams to discuss what matters most. Discipline in growth companies creates freedom. Continuous learning builds excellence. Dr. Frumi works with high energy funded startup teams - usually with leaders under 35 - who are anticipating exponential growth. They must be thirsty for both discipline and learning

Dr. Frumi is the author of a *CEO's Secret Weapon: How to Accelerate Success*. The book was ranked top business book of 2012 by ExecRank and has a forward by her colleague Simon Sinek, international author of best-selling *Start with Why*.