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THE  
DISCOVER YOUR  
**TRUE  
NORTH**

**FIELDBOOK**

A PERSONAL GUIDE TO BECOMING  
AN AUTHENTIC LEADER





The Discover Your *True North* Fieldbook



# The Discover Your *True North* Fieldbook

## **A Personal Guide to Becoming an Authentic Leader**

**Second Edition**

Nick Craig  
Bill George  
Scott Snook

**WILEY**

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*Bill George dedicates this book to his colleagues Nick Craig and Scott Snook,  
who have devoted their lives to enabling leaders  
to discover their True North.*

*Nick Craig dedicates this book to the authentic leaders in his life,  
who showed him the way by being just themselves.*

*Scott Snook dedicates this book to his wife Kathi, and their five children,  
Sean, Kyle, Megan, Robby, and Jessica.*





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## **Preface**

### **Why an Updated *Fieldbook*?**

Since writing the original version of this fieldbook, we have had the privilege of working with over 10,000 individuals on their journey to becoming more authentic leaders. Our experience has ranged from teaching the Authentic Leadership Development MBA course at Harvard Business School to running custom True North programs with senior executives with global responsibilities.

In the process, we have learned a great deal about how people discover and implement their True North. Having worked with many of these individuals over an extended period of time, we have come to understand their long-term journey and what it takes to stay the course.

As Bill said in the Preface of the first edition:

*“Leadership matters. It matters a great deal—to our organizations and institutions, to the people who work in them, and to the people who are served by them. For our society to function effectively, we need authentic leaders who can encourage people to perform at their best and step up and lead themselves.”*

*“I wrote True North because I have a passion to see more people in all walks of life lead authentically and because I wanted to help people like you discover your authentic leadership.”*

In conjunction with *Discover Your True North*, we have amassed our insights and learning to create a significantly updated guide to assist you on your journey to authentic leadership. As you navigate the uncharted territory of the twenty-first century, we hope

our fieldbook assists you in becoming a highly effective—and authentic—leader, one who follows your True North and stays the course!

## **WHY THIS BOOK IS FOR YOU**

One of our greatest learnings since writing the first edition is that everyone can lead. When you call a help desk and your issue isn't in the dropdown menu for the person on the other end, they have a choice in that moment to lead or not. We all know how it feels when they do and when they don't.

In our view, any time you face a decision that impacts others, you are leading. Thus, whether you are a student, parent, bus driver, army officer, CEO, grandparent, or citizen of the world, we all have the opportunity to step up and lead.

We wrote this workbook based on the assumption that we are all on a journey to become more authentic leaders. This book is for those who wish to deepen their connection to the magic of who they are so that when they have the opportunity to lead, they will be more likely to step up, lead effectively, and live a meaningful life.

## **DISCOVERING YOUR AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP**

Becoming an authentic leader is hard work. The process is not much different from becoming a world-class musician or a successful athlete. To become great at anything, you must leverage the unique strengths you were born with, while acknowledging and learning from your shortcomings.

In Bill's case, he had to work very hard to become a leader, enduring disappointing defeats and rejections in high school and early college years. As General Electric's CEO Jeff Immelt describes it, Bill had to make the "leadership journey into [his] own soul" in order to find out who he was, where his real passions lie, and how he could become more effective as a leader. He didn't have a fieldbook like this one to help him, so he made up a plan as he went along. With the help of his wife Penny, close friends, and some important mentors along the way, Bill not only grew and flourished, but he also captured hard-won lessons along the way. Lessons we share with you here.

After searching for a role model for many years, Bill learned that he could never become a great leader by emulating someone else or by minimizing his shortcomings. As "Director of the Year" Reatha Clark King says, "If you're aiming to be like somebody else,

you're being a copycat because you think that's what people want you to do. You'll never be a star with that kind of thinking. But you might be a star—unreplicable—by following your passion.”

Many books offer quick fixes or seven easy steps to leadership. Unfortunately, development doesn't work that way. To realize your potential as a leader, you need a systematic plan to support your growth. That's the goal of *The Discover Your True North Fieldbook*: to offer a clear and detailed path to guide your development.

We encourage you to take on as many leadership experiences early in life as you can. Don't sit back and wait for them to come to you. Seek them out! After each experience, process them by returning to your development plan, make necessary changes, and reengage with a clearer sense of your True North. This is a lifelong process. Start now.

As you embark on this journey, consider these fundamental truths:

- *You can discover your authentic leadership right now.*
- *You do not have to be born with the characteristics or traits of a leader.*
- *You do not have to wait for a tap on your shoulder.*
- *You do not have to be at the top of your organization.*
- *You can step up to lead at any point in your life: You're never too young—or too old.*
- *Leadership is a choice, not a title.*

## USING THIS FIELDBOOK

This fieldbook offers you a series of exercises encouraging you to delve deep into your life story, discover your passions, and develop into an authentic leader. First, you will explore your life story and its relationship to your leadership. Then, you will examine the leadership experiences you have had thus far in your life, including both challenges and disappointments. To keep you from losing your way, we'll also highlight several common patterns that might distract you from realizing your True North.

After a broad review of your life story, we'll ask you to unpack significant crucibles, those searing moments that seem to hold great meaning. By mining your life stories and exploring your crucibles, you begin to uncover unique patterns that help to define who you are, your authentic self.

Next, you will go to work on five key elements of development: self-awareness, values and principles, motivations and sweet spots, support teams, and how to lead an integrated life.

In the final section, we'll ask you to experience what it feels like to make the fundamental shift from "I" to "We," craft a leadership purpose statement, and understand the importance of empowering others in a global context. After completing this work, you'll be ready to create your own Personal Leadership Development Plan (PLDP). This is a dynamic document that you can return to in future years to assess your progress, make any necessary updates, and use as a lifelong guide to remain oriented toward your True North.

## **SHOULD I WORK WITH OTHERS WHILE USING THIS GUIDE?**

Your responses to the exercises and your notes in this fieldbook are personal. However, we do encourage you to share them with trusted others, including mentors, coaches, and members of your support team. Their feedback will be invaluable as you work to develop your PLDP.

As you share your personal story and insights with others, we encourage you to take some risks; experiment with being a bit more vulnerable than perhaps you might ordinarily be. We've found that sharing your story can be incredibly liberating and in fact deepen ties with those you trust.

There are several ways you might use this fieldbook:

1. As an individual, you can complete these exercises and draft your PLDP on your own.
2. You can work through this fieldbook with a group with friends or even new acquaintances. Everyone should complete the exercises individually, and then discuss the insights openly with other members of the group. Then it can be helpful to go back to the exercises and update them, based on others' feedback.

Your group can be led by a professional facilitator who guides your discussion and keeps the group on track. Or you can create a peer-facilitated group, in which leadership of the group rotates to a different member for each session. Bill pioneered this approach with six-person Leadership Development

Groups (LDGs) in the Authentic Leadership Development course at Harvard Business School.

3. To enhance your learning, you can also use *The Discover Your True North Fieldbook* in conjunction with a personal coach or mentor. Experienced partners can help deepen your learning, provide feedback, and add an additional layer of insights and discipline to the process.
4. You can also use this fieldbook with your team at work. As team leader, you can guide your group through the process yourself or enlist a professional team-building consultant or facilitator to enhance the process.
5. You can use this guide along with the text *Discover Your True North* as the basis for a course on leader development, either in an academic setting or in an organization. This material is flexible enough to support leaders at all stages in their careers: young leaders, including college and graduate students; midcareer leaders; leaders at the top of their organizations; and even very experienced leaders perhaps embarking on the third phase of their journeys after having completed their principal leadership roles.

In the case of a larger group, you may need a professor, teacher, or leadership development professional to help structure the material and lead the group. Nick has spent much of his time working with organizations doing just that with great success. Many others have used this book as the backbone for college, MBA, and executive courses on leadership.

## **A FINAL WORD TO USERS OF THIS FIELDBOOK**

As you embark on this journey of self-discovery, let us offer our personal welcome. We encourage you to be as open and honest as possible when completing these exercises. The more truthful and vulnerable you are, the greater the impact of this work. Have the courage to explore your life deeply, to understand who you are as a magnificent human being, to discover where you really fit in this world, how you can use your leadership to impact others in a positive way, and to leave a lasting legacy that you'll be proud of.

We have witnessed deep and lasting transformation in leaders who have taken this journey as they shaped their twenty-first century authentic organizations and institutions. Whether they were leading in business, government, education, or religion, they

discovered that the journey was not only about becoming more authentic themselves, but about empowering everyone they touch to become authentic leaders as well.

Your dedication to discovering your True North will make this world a better and richer place for us all.

*April 2015*

Welcome,  
BILL  
NICK  
SCOTT



# Introduction

## Why Authentic Leadership Development?

Something ignited in my soul . . . And I went my  
own way, deciphering that burning fire.  
—Pablo Neruda

Why is it important for you to become an authentic leader?

Leading in the twenty-first century is vastly different from leading in the twentieth century. People in organizations have changed dramatically—to the point where many will no longer tolerate the classic “command and control leaders” of the last century. Nor are they impressed by charismatic leaders whose leadership is based primarily on personal ego.

Over the past 50 years, many of us worked for powerful leaders who seemed to know where they were going, only to discover later that they were leading us down destructive paths, or that they were in it mostly for themselves and were largely unconcerned with our well-being. Organizations expected us to be loyal to these leaders and wait in line for our turn to lead, if it ever came. And then we learned that our loyalty was not returned, as many lost their pensions and health care. As a consequence, we lost trust in our leaders. Similarly, many of us were dazzled by charismatic leaders who impressed everyone with their charm, yet went off the deep end when the world didn’t bend to their personal whims.

People in organizations today seek authentic leaders whom they can trust, but they are not so easily fooled or so quick to offer their loyalty. Many are knowledge workers who often know more than their bosses. They want the opportunity to step up and have an impact now. They are willing to work extremely hard, but will do so only for an organization whose purpose they believe in, as they are seeking meaning and significance in their work. They are willing to trust their leaders only if they prove themselves worthy of their trust.

If you want to be *effective* as a leader today, then you must be *authentic*. If you are not authentic, the best people won't want to work with you, and they won't give you their best work.

What do authentic and effective leaders do?

- They readily align people around a common purpose that inspires them to peak performance.
- They unite people around a common set of values so that everyone knows precisely what is expected.
- They empower others to step up and lead so that people throughout the organization are highly motivated and give their best.
- They are in constant dialogue with all constituencies; as leaders, they bear the responsibility of engaging not only shareholders, but customers, employees, and communities as well.

This is not easy. It is the hard side of leadership.

The easy side of leadership is getting the short-term numbers right. Many smart people can figure out how to do that. It is much more difficult to get people aligned, empowered, and committed to serve a broad set of constituencies.

Being *authentic* as a leader creates a virtuous cycle. The very best people will want to work with you, and as a result, performance will be superior, and you will be able to take on ever greater challenges.

The bottom line is this: In the twenty-first century, without authentic leaders, there will be no sustained effectiveness in organizations.

With authentic leaders, the possibilities are unlimited.

## WHAT IS AN AUTHENTIC LEADER?

*Authentic leaders have discovered their True North and live it to align people around a shared purpose by empowering others to lead authentically in order to create value for all stakeholders.*

*Discover Your True North Fieldbook* is about mining your life story for deep insights, uncovering the unique gifts that you bring to the world, clarifying your core values, and knowing the underlying purpose of your leadership.

This journey is not about style. This is a common misconception. Authentic leadership is about the deeper you; by knowing and living from your leadership purpose and core values, you are able to let go of seeing yourself as one type of leader (strategic, tactical, introverted, extroverted, etc.). You begin to realize that who you are, your True North, gives you the flexibility to excel in a wide range of situations, all while being true to your authentic self.

Aligning others around a shared purpose and values becomes possible when you can see and feel the connection of your own purpose and values to those of your organization. This enables others to really trust you, increase engagement, and produce higher levels of performance.

This does not mean you have to be perfect. Far from it. Like all of us, you can have your weaknesses and be subject to the full range of human frailties, mistakes, and still be a successful authentic leader. In fact, by acknowledging your shortcomings and admitting your errors, you will connect with people and empower them.

Empowering others to lead is the final element of authentic leadership development. As we stated earlier, true leaders help others become more authentic. Our success is ultimately measured by the ability of others to discover their True North.

## **HOW WILL THIS FIELDBOOK HELP YOU BECOME AN AUTHENTIC LEADER?**

To develop as an authentic leader, you start by reviewing your life story and mining it for patterns and inspiration. You anchor your current leadership profile by reviewing past experiences with leading in order to learn from them. You explore common reasons why leaders lose their way by being an imposter, rationalizer, glory seeker, loner, or shooting star. You identify and unpack significant life crucibles to discover how they influence and shape who you are and how you lead. These elements are covered in Part One of this fieldbook.

Part Two focuses on several elements that define the True North compass:

- *Leading with self-awareness* requires you to ask for tough feedback, be vulnerable, and have compassion for yourself—the cornerstone of authentic leader development.
- *Leading through values* asks you to gain some clarity about your core values, leadership principles, and ethical boundaries.

- *Leading from your sweet spot* encourages you to define when you are at your best by discerning patterns of essential strengths and passions.
- *Leading with wisdom from others* requires you to confront the raw truth—you don’t have to go it alone—by encouraging you to conduct an audit of your personal support team.
- *Leading in all parts of your life* demands that you show up the same in every domain of your life and encourages you to define what it really means to live an integrated life.

Part Three focuses on authentic leadership in action. It moves from leading with purpose to empowering others in your organization by selecting the appropriate leadership style to fit the situation. We also explore what it takes to lead in a global context.

Introduction	Part One	Part Two	Part Three	Conclusion
	Examine Your Leadership Journey	Discover Your Authentic Leadership	Put Your Authentic Leadership into Action	
	Chapter 1 Life Story	Chapter 4 Develop Your Self-Awareness	Chapter 9 The Transformation from I to We	
Introduction Why Authentic Leadership Development?		Chapter 5 Practice Your Values	Chapter 10 Lead with Purpose	Chapter 13 Create Your Personal Leadership Development Plan
	Chapter 2 Losing Your Way	Chapter 6 Find Your Sweet Spot	Chapter 11 Empower Others to Lead	
	Chapter 3 Crucibles	Chapter 7 Build Your Support Team	Chapter 12 Become a Global Authentic Leader	
		Chapter 8 Integrate Your Life		

We conclude by asking you to summarize and integrate everything you've learned in this guide by preparing your own Personal Leadership Development Plan.

## YOUR IDEA OF LEADERSHIP

This fieldbook is for anyone interested in becoming more authentic, whether you are currently in a formal leadership position or not, if you plan to lead in the future, or even if you don't typically think of yourself as a leader.

Consider these contrasting examples:

"From my earliest days I have been fascinated with leadership," said Kevin Sharer, CEO of Amgen. "When somebody asked me at 10 years old, 'What do you want to do when you grow up?' I said, 'I just want to be in charge.'"

"I don't think other people think of me as a leader," said David Kelley, founder of IDEO. "'Leader' is a funny word for me. You see, I'm a collaborator. If there is a problem, I call all the smart people I know and get them in a room and have them figure it out."

How about you? How do you think of yourself as a leader?

### INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE 1: LEADERSHIP IMAGES IN YOUR LIFE

You first learn about leadership and leaders by watching others. These examples offer patterns from which to learn. They are the raw material from which to construct the conceptions of leadership you carry into your work and your life.

The purpose of this exercise is to call to mind what you already know about leading, those implicit theories of leadership you've developed by watching others.

*Think of five leaders, past or present, whom you have admired. Write their names below, and then answer for yourself the questions that follow.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

*Which of these leaders have had the greatest impact on your conceptions of leadership?*

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

*What specific examples of leading stand out in your mind for each of these leaders?*

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

*Which three of these leaders do you consider to be authentic?*

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

*What reservations or concerns might you have about following each one?*

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

*How did the context in which each of them led differ from what you face today?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*What qualities, if any, of these three leaders would you like to emulate?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*What qualities, if any, would you like to avoid?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## **NO LEADER IS PERFECT**

The biographies of those most often placed on the “best leaders” lists can be surprising at times. Even the most widely admired leaders have very human weaknesses: notable failures as well as successes, startling inconsistencies in relationships or behaviors, and even times of intense struggle with their core values and principles. These struggles do not disqualify anyone from being a source of inspiration, a role model for others, or a teacher. Indeed, leaders, teachers, and mentors must first know and understand their personal developmental needs in order to help you work on yours.

## INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE 2: YOUR PREPARATION FOR LEADING

The purpose of this exercise is to establish a starting point for your work with this fieldbook.

*What are the most important qualities you bring to leading?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

*All good leaders are continuously developing. Which of your leadership qualities would you like to develop further?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

It is important to keep in mind those qualities that you want to work on. This fieldbook is intended to help you fulfill your aspirations to become a more authentic and effective leader. No one can give you the leadership qualities you seek. You already have them within you. This guide is designed to help you gain a clearer understanding of what they are, identify those aspects of yourself that you like and want to embrace, as well as those that you don't necessarily like and want to change.

## LEARNING FROM YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

In Part One, you will begin your leadership journey. You will venture beyond standard signposts of leadership by examining your life story, learning from times when you lost your way, and unpacking significant life crucibles.



# Part One

## Examine Your Leadership Journey

When you're in trouble and all your defenses get stripped away,  
you realize what matters and who matters. That's when you  
need to get back to your roots and to your values.  
—David Gergen, *counselor to four U.S. presidents*

Your life story provides the very foundation for your leadership. Your development as an authentic leader begins by analyzing your story and most formative experiences. As you reflect on your past, you will develop tools to see yourself more clearly, understand your leadership achievements, and embrace your goals for future development.

In Part One of this guide, we begin with your life story.

Chapter 1 Life Story

Chapter 2 Losing Your Way

Chapter 3 Crucibles