

THE BIG IDEAS

Your Job

As Commanding Officer is...

Vision

Begin with the end in mind.

Go the Extra Mile

Outperform your contract.

The Cable Guy

Becomes Hornet.

Lead to Win

Here's how.

"What is leadership? John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States, said, 'If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.' Leadership, therefore is using your influence in the lives of the people you touch to inspire them to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more."

~ Mike Manazir

Learn How to Lead to Win

33 Powerful Stories and Leadership Lessons

BY MIKE MANAZIR · HIDDEN POINT SOLUTIONS © 2023 · 306 PAGES

"You may not see yourself as a leader, but if you are a parent with a child needing to be equipped to succeed in this dynamic world, you are a leader. If coworkers are coming to you for advice and direction on how to do things at work, you are a leader. You may not have the title, but you are a leader.

If you are entrusted with the education of students, you are a leader. If you have one employee relying on your lead, you are a leader. If you are a grandparent and you have grandchildren observing your every move, you are a leader. If you are a counselor helping a struggling person break an addiction, you are a leader. If you aspire to make a meaningful impact on the world, you are a leader. ...

I wrote this book for leaders like you who want to succeed in life. Leaders want to win. Winning in life is to be successful—successful in your marriage, your family, your career, your business, your nonprofit foundation—all while forming deeper relationships with friends and family. You also want to be loved, to be accepted, and valued by others. You want a meaningful life.

I want to share what I believe are the foundational principles that catapult massive success in all these pursuits. I want to share thirty-three powerful stories and leadership lessons that shaped my leadership style, and my journey to win in life. My task as your mentor is to illustrate for you how you can apply what I learned as you enjoy my storytelling."

~ Mike Manazir from *Learn How to Lead to Win*

Mike Manazir ("Muh-naw-zur") is a Retired US Navy Admiral and Top Gun Fighter Pilot.

I got this book on the recommendation of a new, dear friend who happens to be a Commanding Officer in the US military (and a [Heroic Coach](#)). My friend recommended [Jim Mattis's](#) book on leadership (*Call Sign Chaos*) and that book was so good that I asked him what *other* books on leadership he'd recommend. He immediately told me about this one. I immediately got it.

Manazir was one of his cherished mentors. After reading this great book, I can see why.

The book is, as you'd expect from the title, all about helping us learn how to lead to win. It's part memoir, part leadership manual—featuring 33 powerful stories from Admiral Manazir's life and the lessons he gained along the way. (Get a copy [here](#).)

It reminds me of another memoir by another Navy Admiral I admire: Admiral William McRaven's [Sea Stories](#). In fact, as I type that, I realize that this book is kinda like a hybrid of McRaven's memoir AND his latest book called [The Hero Code](#). Mash those two books up and swap out the SEAL stories for a Top Gun Fighter Pilot's and voilà—you get this book.

As you'd expect, the book is PACKED with Big Ideas. I'm excited to share some of my favorites so let's jump straight in!

YOUR JOB AS COMMANDING OFFICER

"Our most powerful lessons are often gained from our most painful failures. As General George S. Patton said, 'Success is how high you bounce when you hit bottom.'"

~ Mike Manazir

"As I approached the day I was to take command of the Tomcatters of Fighter Squadron (VF) 31, I was starting to feel the upcoming burden of command—my first one. I was having a beer with a buddy at the Naval Air Station Oceana Officers' Club Bar, the scene of many junior shenanigans, and for once, I was deadly serious. The question had occurred to me and I asked out loud, 'Why is morale important?'

Seems easy to answer, but I was trying to figure out what the benefit of high morale would be beyond 'everyone is happy.' I mean, I can just order them to do the task, right?

Title 10 of the United States Code outlines the role of the US armed forces. In chapter 511, paragraph 5947, the *Requirement of exemplary conduct* of the Commanding Officer is enshrined in law, and says all commanding officers are required to 'promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the officers and enlisted persons under their command or charge.'"

That's from chapter-story-lesson #16.

After reading the front and back covers and some of the inspiring testimonials, I opened up to a random page and read THAT passage. And... I knew I needed to make it a Big Idea.

Your job? First... As per the introduction, know this: YOU ARE A LEADER. Period.

Whether you're a parent or a grandparent or a coach or an HR executive or an addiction counselor or a teacher or ANYONE who has ONE person looking to them for guidance.

If you're alive, at the VERY least, you are the Commanding Officer of YOUR OWN LIFE.

So... Start acting like it.

How? Well, let's open up to Title 10 of the United States Code outlining the role of the US armed forces as we recognize the fact that ALL of us are engaged in the eternal battle between vice and virtue—the "great combat" as Socrates put it 2,500 years ago.

Chapter 511, Paragraph 5947 outlines the REQUIREMENTS OF EXEMPLARY CONDUCT (what a beautiful phrase!) for YOU, the Commanding Officer of your life.

Your job is to, and I quote: "promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the officers and enlisted persons under their command or charge."

After that passage above, Admiral Manazir says: "Here's how Admiral Manager puts it: 'In my case, that was some 350 people. I was the Morale Officer by law.' From that moment on, with each command I had, my name tag read Morale Officer, right under my name. People would look at me funny and ask, 'What the hell is that?'

I'd reply, 'Let me tell you about that. Title 10 of the US Code says—'

Lots of people misinterpreted my name tags as indicating I was the 'Fun Officer,' in charge of making people happy. It's not happiness that underpins high morale. Life in the military, especially deployed, is often not fun. It is about results. I was personally responsible for the operational results of my command.

I realized I'd get better results if morale in my command was high. I worked at motivating people to do their best, by rewarding them for results and celebrating those who achieved wins through individual efforts. They were more motivated—and more productive—when I let them do their jobs. When they were recognized for their achievements, it motivated them to do even better the next time. Everyone likes being on a winning team."

Remember: You are the Commanding Officer of your life.

"I always had the confidence that given the opportunity to work at something long enough, I would eventually master it. I expected to be as good as the best and better than the rest. Attitude is a key part of it. As Henry Ford said, 'Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right.'"

~ Mike Manazir

"This defeat became a foundational leadership lesson for me. I learned that just because you have a clear goal and you work hard at it doesn't mean you will always achieve the goal-the first time. The path to success is paved with disappointments and defeats along the way. You pick yourself up, refocus on the goal, and go back to work with even greater determination. That's what winners do."

~ Mike Manazir

We have a moral obligation to "promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare" of everyone in your charge—starting with YOURSELF.

I salute you, Morale Officer. LET'S GO.

P.S. As I read that passage about optimizing morale, I circled "celebrating" and thought of BJ Fogg. BJ tells us that the act of CELEBRATING our and other people's success is HUGE. ([Check out this +1 on How to Celebrate.](#)) He says: "If there's one concept from my book I hope you embrace, it's this: People change best by feeling good, not by feeling bad."

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

"I jumped up. 'That's it! I want to go to the Naval Academy and be one of them!' I declared to my parents on the concrete bleachers of the stadium. 'I'm going to the Naval Academy.' The spectacle of the Brigade of Midshipmen marching onto the field was the catalyzing thought that changed the course of my life.

Two days later, I knocked on the guidance counselor's door at Robert Smalls Junior High School with the express purpose of determining the guaranteed path to Annapolis. The guidance counselor said to me, 'If you want to go to the Naval Academy, you have to pass these classes.' She took out an 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper, turned it sideways and drew four columns titled ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. She then wrote in the columns all the courses I had to take each year to go to the Naval Academy.

I attended four different high schools. In each school, I presented that sheet of paper to the guidance counselor and informed them I needed to take these courses. I was on a mission. Like a treasure map, this priceless piece of paper formed my academic path to the Academy, and I held to it all four years, always teaming with school counselors and teachers and coaches to help me on my journey.

This is a fundamental success principle for mentoring, whether it is your children, grandchildren, or your direct reports. Start with a clear vision. Define your goal with simple clarity. Develop a plan to fulfill it. And drive the plan faithfully to completion. This is the 'begin with the end in mind' success principle Stephen Covey talks about in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. This book is a must-read for anybody seeking to lead to win."

Welcome to story-chapter-lesson #1.

In this chapter, Admiral Manazir tells us about his disciplinarian Marine father (who also went to the Naval Academy and rarely took the time to praise) and his encouraging mother (who complimented his father's style and was always there to celebrate).

Manazir had his life-changing epiphany attending the Navy-Georgia football game in the eighth grade. As it turns out, I had MY life-changing epiphany about what I wanted to do with my life when I was first introduced to Stephen Covey's *7 Habits* as a 20-year-old attending a leadership development event.

As a first-generation college student raised in a conservative blue-collar, Catholic family, Covey's book opened my eyes to the astonishing possibility that we could DELIBERATELY create a life of deep meaning and service. My life today can be traced to that one event.

So... Do YOU have any life-defining moments you can celebrate?

And... What's your CURRENT mission in life?

Covey's wisdom to "Begin with the end in mind" is ALWAYS worth remembering.

He tells us: "Begin with the end in mind" is based on the principle that all things are created twice. There's a mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation to all things."

"I came to appreciate the fact that sometimes the best thing that can happen to you is to fail-and be given the opportunity to try again. You learn some of your most valuable lessons once you have persevered through a failure."

~ Mike Manazir

"Are you able to go through your tough experiences and find growth in your character and your inner strength? Can you feel the lessons you learned from the hard times? Can you come to a place where you feel grateful for the pain and suffering because an ordeal made you stronger?"

~ Mike Manazir

"It was Dwight D. Eisenhower who said the supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity."

~ Mike Manazir

"Get clear on what you want. Embrace the setbacks. They make you better. Look for the greater opportunity embedded in your disappointments."

~ Mike Manazir

This Covey wisdom is also always worth remembering: *"I believe that a life of integrity is the most fundamental source of personal worth. I do not agree with the popular success literature that says that self-esteem is primarily a matter of mindset, of attitude—that you can psych yourself into peace of mind. Peace of mind comes when your life is in harmony with true principles and values and in no other way."*

P.S. At the end of most chapters, Admiral Manazir recommends a number of books. Here's a list of the books he recommends that we have featured: [Think and Grow Rich](#) by Napoleon Hill, [As a Man Thinketh](#) by James Allen, [The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership](#) by John Maxwell, [How to Stop Worrying and Start Living](#) by Dale Carnegie, [How to Win Friends and Influence People](#) by Dale Carnegie, and [The Power of Intention](#) by Wayne Dyer.

THINK AHEAD AND GO THE EXTRA MILE

"Here's the takeaway: If you want to succeed at any endeavor that has competition, go the extra mile. Do a little more than expected. Then do more. Strive with all your talents to be the best. And there is always competition. I don't care if it is a promotion, a city league softball game, being the top sales leader on your team, or even dating. You are in a competition. And some of the other competitors are always pretty darn good. ...

I also want to offer this important principle: When you are going to do anything, especially something difficult, see yourself, and say to yourself that you are going to win. If I had entered the Academy with the thought 'I am going to try to fly jets,' 'I am going to try to graduate,' I know I would not have done so well.

There is a huge difference between trying and commitment. Commitment to winning makes you go the extra mile. I know this kind of attitude puts you more at risk of disappointment. I would rather greatly increase my odds at winning and face the risk of being disappointed, than give something important a mediocre try. As John Paul Jones famously said, "Those will not risk, cannot win."

That's from a chapter called "Think Ahead" in which we go through flight school with Mike—before he earned his wings and his Nasty call sign.

Get this... Before Mike went to the Navy's flight school, he invested his own savings and went to his OWN flight school—earning a private flying license BEFORE he went through the grueling Navy training. THAT, my dear friend, is a perfect example of going the extra mile and going ALL IN while playing to win.

Btw. Any time I think of going the extra mile, I think of Jesus. More specifically, I think of the great Unity minister, Eric Butterworth and his great book, [Discover the Power Within You](#).

He tells us: *"The admonition to go the second mile relates to the right of the Roman soldiers in Jesus' time to compel subject peoples to carry their burdens for one mile. It was the imposition of despotism, but the subject people could do nothing about it. Jesus indicates an uncommon-sense way of doing something about it. They could break their bonds of enslavement by doing what was demanded of them as if they really enjoyed doing it. And that doesn't make sense, does it? ... When you go the second mile—give more to your work, are more thoughtful and kind to people, become a joyous giver and a gracious receiver—suddenly life takes on new meaning. On the second mile you find happiness, true friends, real satisfaction in living—and probably a larger pay check, too."*

I also think of some Jim Afremow wisdom from his great book, [The Champion's Comeback](#).

He tells us: *"An uncompromising approach in training and continuous hustle in competition is vital to achieving sports-related goals. J.J. Watt is an NFL All-Pro defensive end for the Houston Texans. His willingness to embrace the extra effort required for excellence is one of*

"All the resources you need are available to you. You just have to pursue your dream relentlessly. If you believe it, you can achieve it."

~ Mike Manazir

"Mentors who had the biggest impact on my life did three things. One, they believed in me and saw possibilities within me that I couldn't see. Two, they opened doors of opportunity. Three, they gave me the benefit of their wisdom and experience to guide my way."

~ Mike Manazir

"My standing leadership mantra is that an effective leader only needs to do two things: give guidance and remove barriers. This assumes the leader resists the urge to micromanage (a sure path to failure) and has learned to delegate (your path to success)."

~ Mike Manazir

the main reasons for his success. Here's what Watt says about working hard and representing yourself well: 'I think no matter what job you do—I don't care what job it is—you want to outperform your contract. I feel like that's how everybody should attack their job, at least. You should want people to think you're underpaid because of how hard you work, because of how well you do your job, because of how you go about your business.'

Take a moment for honest self-reflection. Are you outperforming your contract? Are you attacking your job on a daily basis? What about in your sport? Are you one of the hardest workers on your team? Put in 100 percent maximum effort toward your goals and bring a passion to the work. Be willing to put in the blue-collar labor rather than wishing you had more talent so that everything would come easily. It never will. The great ones make it look easy, but only after they put in the time and work."

Here's to going ALL IN as we go the extra mile and outperform our contracts, Hero!

P.S. One of the things I found most powerful about the book was Admiral Manazir's humility and willingness to share the number of times he made SIGNIFICANT mistakes—and how he learned from them every time. In a chapter called "Fight the Fear—Keep Moving Forward," he tells us about a "night in the barrel" in which he failed to land his jet on an aircraft carrier SEVEN TIMES. He was almost out of fuel and another miss would have meant him ejecting out and sending a perfectly good \$75 million (!) jet into the depths of the ocean. :/

He tells us: "I am convinced that courage is not defined by the absence of fear. It is defined by what we do with our fears. I believe a hero is someone who keeps their courage one second longer than the person next to them. You have to face the fear and step into it."

THE CABLE GUY

"On many occasions, I have been more delighted in the advancement of those I've mentored than I ever was for my own. It starts with a mindset. You either see possibilities for more in the people around you, or you don't. It is unfortunate that, in my experience, many leaders first see the limitations of their people. Your vision of your people can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. They simply mirror back to you what you project to them.

I have come to believe there are two kinds of people: those who see possibilities in every challenge and those who see challenges in every possibility. My encouragement to you is to choose to see new possibilities for yourself. See new possibilities for your people and gain the confidence that you can overcome your challenges. Seek a mentor and seek to be a mentor. Empower people to soar to new heights."

That leadership lesson is from a chapter called "Change Lives—Plant Seeds of Possibilities." The powerful story from which that lesson is extracted goes something like this...

It's May 1995. Nasty is in a nasty dog fight 50 miles Northeast of Key West. He's in his F-14D Tomcat, going head to head against Major Ragan "Hornet" Nicholl who was with the Florida Air Guard out of Homestead Air Force Base near Miami and flying an F-15C Eagle. Hornet got behind Nasty's "wing line in a gun solution" and he was "dead." They followed that first round up with another run at it. This time Nasty got the best of Hornet. Then they went at it one more time and finished even. Awesome.

And... Although Nasty tells the story so you feel like you're up in the air with him, that wasn't quite the point of the story.

This is... Rewind thirteen years. It's February 1985. Nasty and his wife, Kelly, had just moved into a new home in Escondido, California.

A young, blond-haired cable guy cruises in to set up their cable. Mr. Cable Guy admires some pictures Nasty has on his living room wall—featuring him flying some Tomcats.

They have a little chat about those pictures and Nasty tells him that if he has a degree from college, he can walk into any Navy recruiter's office and ask for a pilot slot in the Officer Candidate School.

To which Mr. Cable Guy says, "Cool." Then you know what he does? He immediately drives to the nearest Navy recruiter's office. He's told they don't have any slots available. Bummer. Then you know what he does? He walks into an Air Force recruiting office. They take him right away.

That Cable Guy? That's Hornet. (Goosebumps.)

The moral of the story? Our job as leaders is to show people what's possible, help them see their own potential and encourage them along the way. Our job as aspiring Heroes is to be like that young Hornet and seize the opportunities that present themselves to us. Let's do that. TODAY.

P.S. Walt Whitman once said, *"In the faces of men and women, I see God."* <- I love that. I like to say: *"In the faces of men and women, I see Heroes."* <- Do you?

"I encourage leaders to shift their focus from their personal performance to their team's performance. You may be able to produce impressive results. A competent team well led can deliver spectacular results."

~ Mike Manazir

LEAD TO WIN

"Leadership takes time to master. It requires commitment. It requires perseverance. Your leadership success will ultimately rise or fall on the strength of your daily disciplines. What's your morning routine? Do you rise up and choose to be grateful for what you have and where you are? Do you have an attitude check routine? ...

I leave you with this word of encouragement. Leadership is both demanding and wonderfully rewarding. Set your vision for the kind of leader you want to be and the win you want to create for your team and then persevere through the ups and downs until you achieve your dream. Never ever quit. In those moments when the outcome is not what you wanted and your heart is breaking from disappointment, trust providence. A time will come when you can look back on that moment with clarity to see you were exactly where you needed to be—learning something you needed to learn. Failure is simply a lesson learned in your journey. Persevere and trust providence. You'll be okay. ... I pray that you will enjoy a life rich with adventures, failures, successes, and many lives to enrich as you lead to win."

Those are the final words of the book.

Of course, when I read the line about Mike's perspective that *"Your leadership success will ultimately rise or fall on the strength of your daily disciplines,"* I thought of our [Heroic app](#).

So... Who are you at your Heroic best? What are YOUR daily disciplines?

Here's to leading ourselves first and creating the strength for two such that we can weather any storm and emerge stronger as we give the world all we've got and... LEAD TO WIN!

B

Brian Johnson,
Heroic Philosopher CEO

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you'll probably like...

[Sea Stories, Make Your Bed, Think and Grow Rich, As a Man Thinketh, The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, How to Stop Worrying and Start Living, The Power of Intention](#)

About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at [heroic.us](#).