

YOUR LEADERSHIP

EDGE

LEAD ANYTIME, ANYWHERE.

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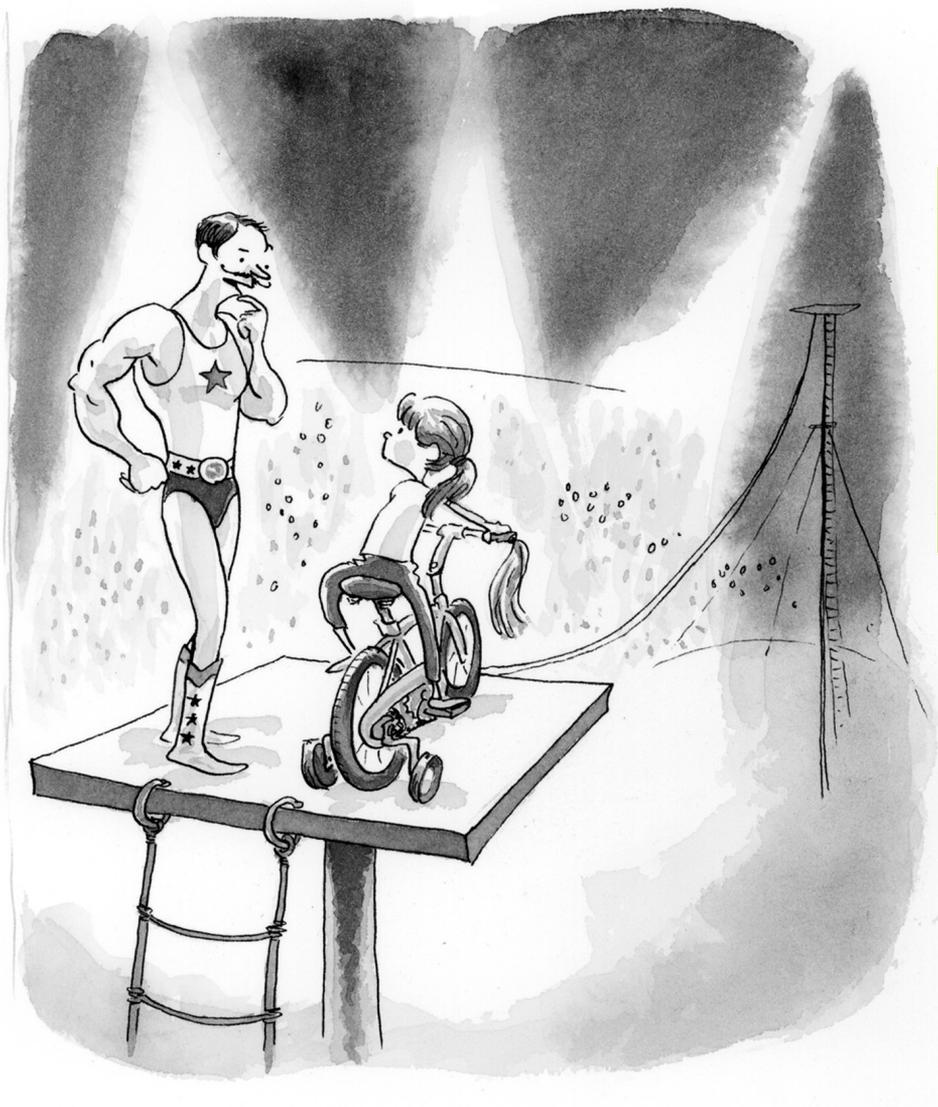
CHAPTER 11
MANAGE SELF

*Experiment Beyond
Your
Comfort Zone*

**If you want to make progress on your challenge,
you'll need to say yes to a little discomfort.**

Successful entrepreneurs understand this instinctively. As soon as one idea or product is launched, they are thinking about the next one. They are constantly expanding their thinking, trying new things and building new skills. They regularly experiment beyond their comfort zone.

Your preferred way of working — your usual style — that's your comfort zone. You may have achieved a lot of success operating this way. Good for you. But chances are that if you want to make progress on a really big challenge — or if you want change to happen faster or last longer — you'll need to push beyond what's comfortable.



MANAGE SELF

“YEAH, I GET THE PART ABOUT YOU
FEELING BETTER WITH TRAINING WHEELS
ON, BUT HERE’S THE THING...”

Marshall Goldsmith's book "What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful" hits on this idea.

Expand your comfort zone through low-risk experiments. When we experiment, we learn. Each time you stop to ask whether your normal approach — your comfort zone — is the correct one, you open yourself up to possibilities. You discover new options. You build the resilience required to lead.

This should be obvious, but experimenting beyond your comfort zone will mean you are uncomfortable. Our default is comfort. We crave it. Our lives revolve around routines. Leadership requires you to resist the human urge for comfort.

Your comfort zone is unique. Personality, culture, position and a whole bunch of other things factor into who we are and what we define as our "edge" — the place where we start experimenting. You don't need to do anything grand. It can be as small as asking a question when you would normally say nothing or staying quiet when you would usually speak up.

*The important thing is that
you choose to experiment,
it is a conscious choice,
and you learn something.*

And while it sounds risky (and it is) you will likely think differently, engage differently and act differently, and then, hopefully, the outcome will look different.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GETTING BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE?

Read "What Got You Here Won't Get You There: How Successful People Become Even More Successful" by Marshall Goldsmith.

SO HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE EXPERIMENTING? ASK YOURSELF THREE QUESTIONS.

1. Am I outside my comfort zone with this effort?
2. Am I unsure of the exact outcome of each experiment?
3. Am I learning?

If the answer is “no” to any of these, you probably aren’t leading anyone to do adaptive work. You may be managing the status quo very effectively and that may be work, but it’s not leadership.

INDICATORS YOU ARE SAFELY OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

- ▶ **YOU ARE FEELING INCOMPETENT BUT WILLING.** You may not see the next step, but you are willing to put your foot out.
- ▶ **YOUR PULSE QUICKENS.** You feel a healthy level of anxiety.
- ▶ **YOU ARE TAKING CONSCIOUS ACTION.** Experimentation is a choice, not a reaction.

INDICATORS YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAR

- ▶ **YOU HAVE LOST YOUR IDENTITY.** Make change in small increments, but not so much that you are no longer recognizable.
- ▶ **YOU HAVE NO CLEAR PURPOSE.** Don’t go beyond your comfort zone just for the thrill. Know the reason behind your risk.
- ▶ **YOU ENTER THE DANGER ZONE.** If you are on the verge of being fired or quitting, find a safer approach.
- ▶ **THE ANXIETY IS CONSUMING YOU.** The anxiety should feel interesting and healthy, not destructive and consuming.



**SIMPLE WAYS TO PRACTICE
EXPERIMENTING BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE
(GIVE ONE OR TWO A TRY IN THE NEXT WEEK)**

- ▶ Meet with someone in your company who makes you uncomfortable.
- ▶ Take a stand on something important to a colleague or a friend. (Or don't take a stand if taking a stand is the norm for you.)
- ▶ Be curious, and ask a question rather than jumping in to give advice.
- ▶ Don't assume you understand exactly what your colleague is talking about. Instead, ask a clarifying question such as, "What do you mean by that?" or "Please, can you tell me more?"
- ▶ If you typically work 50- or 60-hour weeks, work a 40-hour week, and pay attention to what happens as a result.
- ▶ If you normally weigh in early and often in meetings, try counting to 10 before talking.
- ▶ Invite yourself to a meeting on a topic you are curious about.

Lessons from History

EXPERIMENT BEYOND
YOUR COMFORT ZONE

MANAGE SELF

It was 1939 and Nazi Germany and Britain had gone to war. The new king of England, George VI, suffered from a lifelong stammer. As popularized in the 2010 movie “The King’s Speech,” the king set aside his own discomfort with public speaking and stepped to the microphone to declare war on Germany. Millions around the world heard the radio address. It’s hard to imagine a public figure more outside his comfort zone. King George VI delivered an inspiring speech that rallied the British people and set the tone for six long years of war.

Leadership rarely fits nicely within your everyday schedule. Leadership is about doing what is needed, not what is comfortable.

**Here are two poems to inspire you
to reach beyond your comfort zone.**

*It may be that when we no longer know what to do
we have come to our real work,
and that when we no longer know which way to go
we have come to our real journey.
The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings.*

– WENDELL BARRY, “THE REAL WORK”

*We never know how high we are
Till we are called to rise;
And then, if we are true to plan,
Our statures touch the skies.
The heroism we recite
Would be a daily thing,
Did not ourselves the cubits warp
For fear to be a king.*

– EMILY DICKINSON



As a longtime local county commissioner, I've always been partial to the way we've engaged in politics. You know, taking phone calls, attending community gatherings and personal letters to constituents. Unfortunately, we're just not getting a lot of feedback this year, and we really need some guidance from community members. How can we hear from more people?

- FRANK THE FAITHFUL PUBLIC SERVANT

Dear Frank,

Times they are a changing, Frank! Yard signs, letters, calls and town hall meetings no longer keep constituents engaged. Does this mean you need to start tweeting, podcasting and hosting webinars? No. But the ineffectiveness of your traditional methods shows you need to do something different.

We admire your desire for feedback from constituents. But what do you value most? Is it hearing from your constituents or staying within your comfort zone with the traditional ways you mentioned? You seem like a guy who is choosing the latter.

Rather than "take phone calls," make 10 phone calls a day to randomly selected constituents. You'll learn a lot and they'll be stunned. Find a young up-and-coming politician – the one with the huge campaign following who volunteers everywhere and constantly makes waves. Whether you agree with his or her politics or not, take that person to breakfast and ask for advice. He'll be flattered, and you'll learn new approaches.

Want to put some pressure on yourself to experiment? Tell your local paper you want to have 1,000 conversations with constituents in the next year and ask them to hold you to it!

Good luck and thank you for your service!

Onward!