

## S.M.I.L.E. as You Shoot for the Stars!

---

### Your Most Powerful Leadership Tool...

Are you a leader? Do you hold a leadership role within your organization or peer group? Do you aspire to greater leadership roles in the future?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, we need to start with you. **Your most powerful leadership tool is a mirror.** So, let's explore you...



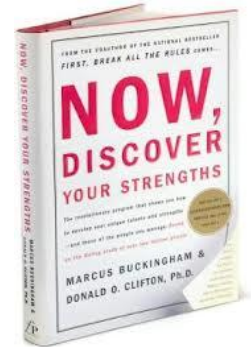
S.m.i.l.e. as You Shoot for the Stars

### Self-Assessment:

For an effective self-assessment, you need complete honesty. Be honest with yourself. Ask others to be honest with you. What do you think you do well? What do people around you recognize that you do well? In coaching and counseling people over the years, I've found that many people don't immediately recognize all the strengths that they have...or they may not know how to express those strengths...

My "aha" moment came after reading *Now, Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Dr. Donald Clifton.

Their StrengthsFinder quiz pointed out that my primary strengths are achiever and learner (along with responsibility, analytical, and focus). While I've always loved learning—especially about people and leadership—I never fully appreciated it as a "strength". That revelation helped me move forward to embrace my love of learning and thirst for knowledge. Now, I always capture goals in life for achieving & learning...tied to my primary strengths...



### **So, what are your strengths?**

Once you have an idea about what you do best and how you can help your team, group, or organization, you have a good foundation to shoot for the stars!

In fact, I've heard it said that if you master the art of leading yourself, you lay the foundation for helping others do the same...

## S.M.I.L.E. as You Shoot for the Stars!

---

s.M.i.l.e. as You Shoot for the Stars

### **Mission Statement:**

A personal mission statement proves crucial in making key choices about your future. Let me share my experience...

In the late-1990s, I was excited about several opportunities at work and a variety of volunteer opportunities through church—and participating in many of them. Then, I took a class entitled, “Assessing Your Leadership Skills”, presented by Dr. Mike Haro. Dr. Haro mentioned that many people in our organization exhibit “more-on” (implying foolish) behavior. He went on to explain that our culture drives people to take more and more work on...which leads to a lack of focus and can impact our work quality. He encouraged us to reflect on that, as we determined next steps in our leadership journey. Following the class, I was determined to be different.

At the time, I used the Franklin Planner (yes, the hard copy version, like the one below).



I noticed that my package included a “Mission Statement Builder”. As a HR professional, I helped organizations develop their vision and mission statements on several occasions...but **the thought never crossed my mind that I should have my own personal mission...**

The mission builder started with a series of questions that help you identify your core values. That part came easy for me. I reflected on my grandfather (Paw Paw) and my father. Both were public servants with the Corpus Christi Army Depot. From them, I learned the importance of balancing work, family, and church responsibilities. They taught me:

- ✓ Integrity: Do what you say
- ✓ Excellence: Do your best
- ✓ Improvement: Get better over time

The process continued, and ultimately, I came out with my personal mission – “To be a Leader wherever I am and improve Leadership wherever I go”...

Like many mission statements, those words may not seem much to you...but for me, they provide clarity about the types of opportunities I should pursue. More importantly, my personal mission gives me a reason not to pursue some opportunities...

**Please note that creating a personal mission statement is not something that can be done quickly.** My experience suggests that it takes deep thought and reflection, and you may find that

## S.M.I.L.E. as You Shoot for the Stars!

---

it takes several rewrites until you have a mission statement that resonates with you...but keep at it. In the end, I can assure you that it's worth it...

**Much like an organization's mission statement, your personal mission statement should be reviewed regularly—particularly after significant life and work transitions.**

There are a few tools I'd suggest for your consideration in this process:

- FranklinCovey now has an online Mission Statement Builder. The Builder uses a very similar process to what I used with the paper version nearly 15 years ago. I've recommended this tool to several people, who have also found it to be a useful tool.
- *The Path: Creating Your Mission Statement for Work & Life* by Laurie Beth Jones is another good tool. Jones uses a variety of questions and prompts to guide the reader through this process.

The bottom line is that you need to create a Personal Mission Statement as you shoot for the stars!

"Your mission statement becomes your constitution, the solid expression of your vision and values. It becomes the criterion by which you measure everything else in your life."

FranklinCovey Web Site

s.m.I.l.e. as You Shoot for the Stars

### **Investigate Your Options:**

Once you understand your strengths & interests and have a well-developed Mission Statement, it's time to Investigate Your Options.

In our organization, we would encourage you to speak to a Human Resources Specialist to understand the various career paths and options available to you that match your personal mission. If you have that kind of support available, use it. In addition to helping you navigate the organization's options, HR specialists can also serve as an advocate for you.

If you serve in a volunteer organization or smaller company without those kinds of resources, there are still many things you can do. Do you have a role model in the organization...someone you look up to and admire? If so, approach him or her about serving as a career mentor. I took this approach early in my career, picking out someone whose character I admired both at work and at church.

When I approached Don Blevins about serving as a mentor, he responded, "I don't think you have the right guy. I'm not even sure what a mentor does." I explained to Don that's exactly why I called him. I appreciated his humility and just wanted to spend time with him, building a relationship. Over the next few years, Don and I met regularly for lunch, and I learned a lot about life, leadership, and succeeding in both.

## S.M.I.L.E. as You Shoot for the Stars!

---

### **Finding a mentor...someone who has been there and done that...will prove invaluable.**

Another suggestion for investigating your options is to seek feedback. What does your supervisor say about your strengths, interests, and future? Does your supervisor have suggestions for your development? If not, ask him or her. Seek your supervisor's perspective. Your supervisor will (generally speaking, of course) have a broader view of the organization, the options, and how your strengths fit.

You can also seek feedback from your peers or a trusted advisor. What opportunities do they think you should pursue and why? All of these perspectives provide good input and information for you as you navigate your career. Much like leadership decisions you will face throughout your career, you will want enough information to make a good decision; however, be careful not to experience "paralysis by analysis." Sometimes, you need to take action and try out something new...maybe something out of your comfort zone...in order to grow.

I did this recently. After serving in the #2 HR job in our organization for 3 years, I read *The Chief HR Officer*—partly because I was seeking ways to prepare for the future and partly because the chief editor of the book was the coordinator for my graduate school HR program at Texas A&M, Patrick M. Wright. From the book and some other readings, I understood that of the Chief HR Officers in industry, 70% spent time outside of HR. The first 20 years of my career were all in HR... At the same time in HR, we were discussing the critical role of the front-line supervisor to employee engagement and workplace culture. As a result, I sought an opportunity to go to our engineering organization as a front-line supervisor. Fortunately, I had a few options due to relationships I've built within the organization over the years. My experience was extremely beneficial, and I'm confident the new perspectives will help our HR organization for the years to come...

I try to live by the great words of Yogi Berra (at the right). Make a decision to try something new, and do it. Investigate your options, as you shoot for the stars!

*"When you come to a fork in the road, take it." – Yogi Berra*

s.m.i.L.e. as You Shoot for the Stars

### **Lead:**

Once you've made your decision about the career option to pursue, you need to lead...and demonstrate your leadership skills...

I appreciate the perspective of leading by serving, popularized by Robert Greenleaf –

---

*"Potential followers will respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants." – Robert Greenleaf in [Servant Leadership](#)*

---

Think about it...every leader everywhere reports to someone. In HR, there is a popular message relating to hiring and selection that says, "Past performance is the best predictor of future performance."

## S.M.I.L.E. as You Shoot for the Stars!

---

Another way to look at it... **followership is the best predictor of future leadership.** How are you as a follower? Does your leader appreciate your results and support? How are you as a servant leader? Are you building positive relationships with those around you?

A few years ago, I read John Maxwell's *The 360° Leader*. After reading this book, I learned that I was doing a good job leading up (strong relationship with my supervisor) and leading down (strong relationship with my team). However, I had neglected relationships with my peers... especially those I did not interact with on a regular basis.

After reading that book, I resolved to initiate regular lunch meetings with my peers. (As a side note, I'm a big fan of the advice to never eat alone... instead, use your lunches as a way to build your network and talk with your mentors and trusted advisors.) I found those meetings to be very helpful, as I built relationships with several peers across the leadership team. When I was promoted, my peers wanted to continue with the lunch discussions... and they've helped provide invaluable feedback, as we all try to help our organization get better over time...

*How are you spending your lunch time?  
Are you using it strategically to build  
relationships?*



So...remember to lead as you shoot for the stars!

s.m.i.l.e. as You Shoot for the Stars

### **Enjoy the Journey:**

This last tip is an important one. Sometimes we can get so focused on a particular destination that we lose sight of our day-to-day learning and growth. You need to enjoy the journey... particularly if it's early in your career...

Several years ago, I attended a leadership class where a leader suggested that we record our leadership learning. Over the past 10 years, I've taken note of a variety of leadership observations (both good and bad examples). At the same time, I've recorded lessons learned from every book I've read. I periodically review these notes and—using my most powerful leadership tool, the mirror—reflect on improvements I can make.

As a HR professional, I've helped organizations over the years plan and conduct organization retreats, where they celebrate their successes of the past year and review their mission and goals for the upcoming year. Recently, I recognized the need to apply this approach to my personal leadership growth and development. I took a day off work for a personal retreat. I took with me my Personal Mission Statement, my Individual Development Plan, Upward Feedback from my team members, and my leadership learning notes.

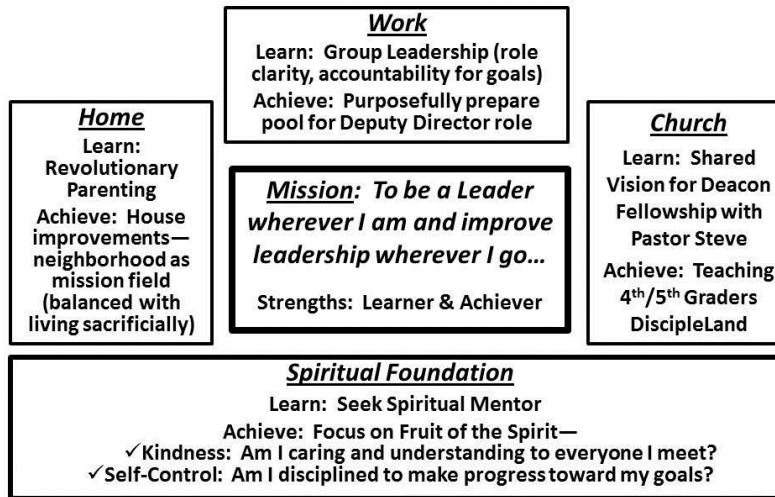
## S.M.I.L.E. as You Shoot for the Stars!

---

During the retreat, I developed a “Balanced Scorecard” for myself, which included annual goals for my role as a Husband, Father, Employee, and Church Member.

April 16, 2012

### Brady’s Balanced Scorecard



All of those roles are critical to my work-life fit. **You’ll need to determine what roles are important for your work-life fit.**

In our organization, I often tell employees, “This place will take as much as you give it.” So, you have to determine the boundaries that provide the right balance between your professional goals and your work-life fit. If you’re not intentional about setting those boundaries, I can assure you that you’ll be disappointed in life’s consequences. Unfortunately, I’ve seen too many people climb the professional ladder at the expense of their marriages and families. Again, **be sure that you’re making the choices that fit with your personal mission, values, and aspirations both at work and at home.**

I’ve found that having a plan and reviewing it periodically is both helpful & important. I would strongly encourage you to take the time you need to make your plan, set goals, and periodically review your plan.

I like to keep the end in mind; and I’m a big fan of the group Phillips, Craig, and Dean. Their song, “Nothing to Prove” sums up how I want to leave my career and my life:

---

*Live with no excuses; love with no regrets; laugh a lot and leave this life with nothing left unsaid. Make this world a better place; don't be afraid to cry. And when it's finally time to say goodbye, there's nothing to prove, nothing to lose, and nothing to hide.*

---

## S.M.I.L.E. as You Shoot for the Stars!

---

So, I encourage you again...enjoy the journey, as you shoot for the stars!

-----

Thank you for following these tips all the way to the end. I welcome your reactions, feedback, and suggestions.

Serving leaders who shoot for the stars,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brady Pyle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brady Pyle

[www.OutOfThisWorldLeadership.com](http://www.OutOfThisWorldLeadership.com)

[brady@outofthisworldleadership.com](mailto:brady@outofthisworldleadership.com)

