

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE 360 DEGREE LEADER*

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TALENT  
IS  
NEVER  
ENOUGH

DISCOVER THE CHOICES THAT WILL  
TAKE YOU BEYOND YOUR TALENT

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

# 1

## BELIEF LIFTS YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *BELIEF* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. Write a short description of yourself as you are today.
2. What are your top five talents? If you have not explored them before, you may have to do some work to answer this question. If necessary, buy a book like *Now, Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton and take the Strengths Finder quiz, or do the exercises in *What Color Is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles. In addition, think about your most significant and fulfilling accomplishments. And interview colleagues, family, and close friends to get their input concerning your talents. When you have completed your research, list those strengths.
3. List the three activities you are most passionate about.
4. Think about what opportunities may be presenting themselves to you. They may be related to where you live, where you work, who you know, or what's happening in your industry or area of interest. List as many opportunities as you can.

5. Take some time to consider what kind of picture emerges based on these talents, interests, and opportunities. How might they come together for someone other than you, someone with few obstacles or limitations—someone who was in the right place at the right time? Dream big—no idea is too outrageous. Brainstorm what someone in that situation might be able to do, what he or she could become. What would be this person's mission? Using a phrase or short description, write down these things.
6. What you just wrote is a description of who you could be. It is a picture of your potential. How does it compare with the description you wrote in Exercise 1? Believe in your potential, yourself, your mission, and your fellow human beings. How can you light the fire of your belief and increase your expectations to become that person? Give yourself an action plan to do it. Enlist the help of others if needed.

# 2

## PASSION ENERGIZES YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *PASSION* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. To get a better handle on what you are passionate about, answer these questions:  
What makes you sing?  
What makes you cry?  
What makes you dream?
2. Make a list of the people in your life who try to put out the fire of your passion. If you can simply stop spending time with some of them, then plan to distance yourself. For those with whom you *must* spend time, create a strategy for minimizing the damage they can do to you. If you're married and your spouse is on this list, then seek help from a professional to help you repair the damage and rebuild relational bridges.
3. Think about key firefighters in your life, both past and present. Make spending time with some current firefighters a priority in the coming weeks. Write a note to a firefighter from your past to thank him or her for inspiring you to succeed.

4. Spend some time identifying the top priorities in your life. Think broadly and include the areas of work, family, recreation, health, and so on. Try to write out the priorities in order of importance.
5. Compare what you have written about your passions and talent from Chapter 1 and the priority list you just completed. How do they match up? What could you change to help align them? What price will you likely pay if you neglect to make changes?
6. For whom can you be a firelighter? Where and when is your passion contagious? How can you add value to others by helping to light their fire?

# 3

## INITIATIVE ACTIVATES YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *INITIATIVE* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. Spend some time creating a list of all the reasons why you do not display greater initiative. Be thorough and list everything you can think of. Once the list is complete, go through and mark each entry with either an *E* for excuse or an *R* for reason.

Now, create three new lists from your original list. The first is to be called “No More Excuses.” On it, rewrite each excuse as a statement of responsibility. For example, if one of your excuses stated, “I don’t have enough money,” rewrite it to say, “I will no longer blame not having enough money.” Post this list where you can see it every day.

The second list comes from the remaining reasons on your original list and will be called “Facts of Life.” Anything you have no control over and cannot change—such as the actions of others, your age, or the economy—is to go on this list. These are things you must simply accept.

Whatever remains from your list of reasons goes on the third list called “My Responsibility.” Since these things are your responsibility, you must solve them. Put them on your to-do list and get to work.

2. What causes you to procrastinate?
  - Are you in denial about the consequences of not taking initiative and responsibility for yourself?
  - Are you waiting for others to motivate you instead of working to motivate yourself?
  - Are you waiting for everything to be perfect before you act?
  - Are you fantasizing about tomorrow instead of focusing on what you can do today?
  - Are you trying to go it alone?

Identify a specific action you can take to overcome your procrastination, designate a specific time on your calendar to take it, and if needed, enlist someone to help you follow through.

3. Think about something you strongly desire to do but are currently afraid of. As Dan Reiland did when he jumped out of the plane, what step can you take to put yourself into action mode, thus taking your focus off your fear?
4. What are you currently neglecting that is preventing your talent from becoming activated? Is it a decision you should be making? A problem you should be solving? A possibility you should be examining? A project you should be starting? A goal you should be reaching? An opportunity you should be seizing? A dream you should be fulfilling? Figure out what it is and determine to tackle it using the steps outlined in the chapter:
  - Divide it by categories.
  - Prioritize it by importance.
  - Order it by sequence.
  - Assign it by abilities.
  - Accomplish it by teamwork.

# 4

## FOCUS DIRECTS YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *FOCUS* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. In what area has lack of focus tapped your energy in the past? Is this a recurring problem? If so, try to determine why.
2. Give an example of a time when your ability to focus well helped you to achieve excellent results. What helped you to maintain your focus? What can you learn from that experience?
3. Where have you been putting your focus? Do you spend a great part of your time thinking about what happened in the past? Are you placing much hope in the future, when you hope to get a raise, establish a relationship, take a vacation, or enjoy retirement? Or are you concentrating on the here and now? Try to break down your thinking time according to percentages and write them here (making sure they total 100 percent):

\_\_\_\_\_ Past  
\_\_\_\_\_ Present  
\_\_\_\_\_ Future



I believe it is healthy to spend 90 percent of your time focused on the present. Considering the past 5 percent of the time is useful if you learn from your successes and mistakes. Contemplating the future 5 percent of the time is useful to make sure your current activities are pointed in the right direction. Anything more may be detrimental to your productivity. You will have to begin making adjustments to refocus yourself on the present.

4. At the end of Chapter 1, I asked you to identify your strengths. Do you typically focus on developing and maximizing them? Or do you gravitate to shoring up your weaknesses? What can you do to place an even greater emphasis on your strengths? What can you give up that is undermining your focus? What untapped strength or talent do you suspect that you possess but have neglected? What concrete step can you take to start utilizing it?
5. Since the present is the only time over which you have any control, how can you “up the ante” and make your activities even more focused? Your goal should be to make every action count toward the results you desire.
6. Think about something you would like to have. It can be anything—a book or CD, a set of golf clubs, a vacation, or even a new car. Instead of just buying it, consider making it a reward that you will allow yourself to have once you have earned it by producing some kind of desired result. Make sure that the effort matches the reward. (If you’re not sure about whether they match, ask a friend or your spouse.)

# 5

## PREPARATION POSITIONS YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *PREPARATION* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. What process are you currently using to assess where you should be going and what you should be doing? How has it been working?
2. Find a mentor to help you check your current “alignment.” Here are some questions you can ask him or her to help you get started:
  - Am I looking at the right “target”?
  - Am I seeing the potential problems?
  - Is where I’m headed going to put me in the best place for my next step?
  - What strengths do you see in me?
  - What is the potential downside of where I’m headed?
  - What is the potential upside?
  - What is my most urgent need?
3. Trainer and consultant Dru Scott Becker says that one of the best ways that people can prepare is to make use of the “Grab 15” principle. Whether you want to improve your garden, learn a new language, or get ready to start a new business, find fifteen minutes a

day and work at it. She says fifteen-minute blocks add up fast, keep your head continually in the game, and often lead to even more concentrated time working on your goals. But even if you don't go beyond the fifteen-minute blocks, stick with it six days a week for a year, and you'll devote seventy-eight hours to your goal.

Where and when can you grab fifteen minutes every day? Identify a goal and lay out a plan to achieve it—fifteen minutes at a time.

# 6

## PRACTICE SHARPENS YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *PRACTICE* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. If you want to practice well, then you need to make sure you are incorporating the Five Pillars of Practice into your routine. Think about each one:
  - *An excellent teacher or coach.* Have you sought out someone who can help you learn your craft, sharpen your skills, or practice well? If you already have a coach, is he or she the best person to help you during this season? Do you need to find a specialist to help you improve in a specific area? You can't maximize your potential on your own.
  - *Your best effort.* Are you practicing in a way that allows you to give your best effort? Are you practicing at the right time? Are you in the best place? Are you giving yourself incentives to give your best? Do what you must to give your best.
  - *A clear purpose.* Every time you practice, do you know what you are trying to accomplish? Do you have the larger goal in mind as well as the specific improvement you are trying to make?

- *The greatest potential.* Are you focused on developing your greatest talent? Are you staying in your strength zone? Your greatest progress and your greatest contributions will come from your areas of greatest talent.
  - *The right resources.* Do you have everything you need to practice well? What could you invest in that would facilitate your going to the next level?
2. Where are you on the practice continuum? Are you just starting out and facing a big learning curve? Are you at the phase of rapid progress? Have you already made the greatest gains of this season of your practice life and are now working on fine-tuning? Knowing where you are helps you tailor your practice routine to get the most out of it.
  3. How disciplined are you when it comes to practice? Track yourself. Use a practice journal to record your practice sessions for thirty days. Write down not only when you practice and for what duration, but also make notes of what you worked on and how it went. At the end of that period, review your progress.
  4. Elmer G. Letterman asserted, “The average human being in any line of work could double his productive capacity overnight if he began right now to do all the things he knows he should do, and to stop doing all the things he knows he should not do.” How can you apply this piece of wisdom to your practice routine? What currently wastes your time? What task do you perform as a matter of habit that could be replaced by something that would sharpen your talent? “Audit” yourself and reinvent your practice routine.
  5. Talent-plus people are always striving to do a little bit more. Upon which of the four areas outlined in the chapter do you currently need to focus more: effort, time, help, or change? What will you do to create that little extra that can take you from ordinary to *extraordinary*?

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## PERSEVERANCE SUSTAINS YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *PERSEVERANCE* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. Purpose gives passion, and passion feeds perseverance. What is your purpose? If you haven't defined it and written it out, do so now.
2. How often do you think you make excuses when you fail to accomplish something you set out to do? Is it 20 percent of the time? Perhaps 60 percent of the time? Define it as a percentage. Now do this: ask three people who know you well (and who see you at your worst) to define how often you make excuses.  

If the figure they give you averages more than 10 percent, then you need to work on this area. First, ask those people to hold you accountable for not making excuses. Second, train yourself to ask, *What can I learn from this?* rather than, *What went wrong?*
3. What is your attitude toward life's challenges? Do you expect obstacles and failures? What do you do if you don't succeed right away? Do you give up and try something else, or do you keep working at it?

Stamina comes from expecting life to be difficult, from developing the habit of overcoming adversity, and from taking one more step when you think you have nothing left. What recent obstacle, failure, or setback that stopped you can you revisit and attack again with renewed energy? Take it on again. And when you feel like quitting again, push yourself to take one more step. *Then* reevaluate it and see if you need to take *one more step* again.

4. How can you personally apply the concept of life as a series of short races? Where will this idea most benefit you? How will it change your approach to a task, responsibility, or opportunity?
5. What are you willing to give to realize your potential and maximize your talent as a talent-plus person? Give it some think time and create two lists: things you are willing to give up to go to the next level, and things you are unwilling to compromise.

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## COURAGE TESTS YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *COURAGE* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. How often do you fail? The frequency is a sure indication of your inclination to take risks. Successful people understand that failure is a natural part of the process of making progress. For seven days, make it a point to record every failure in a journal or planner. At the end of the week, evaluate your willingness to take risks.
2. Talk to your spouse or a trusted friend and ask where you most need to change and grow. Promise this individual that if he or she will confide in you, you will hold your peace and not defend yourself or make excuses for a week. Then keep your promise and use those seven days to reflect on the person's assessment of you. Remember, it takes courage to seek a truth that may be painful to you.
3. Which do you value more highly, pleasure or progress? One of the ways to assess the honesty of your answers is to examine your goals. Do your goals involve comfort or accomplishment? If pleasure and comfort are higher on your priority list, you may not be taking enough chances to maximize your talent and reach your potential.



4. Plan to develop your courage by doing something uncomfortable or scary once or twice a week for two months. Put them on your calendar and to-do list. These actions can be small. You don't have to sky-dive or bungee jump, although you can do those kinds of things if you are inclined to. The more actions requiring courage that you take, the braver you will become. Your goal is to develop a lifestyle of courage.
5. When others treat you poorly, how do you respond? Do you respond in kind, giving tit for tat? It's often not easy to take the high road. However, if you can, you will find that your life has less conflict, you will experience less stress, and others will be attracted to you. Begin by forgiving others for past hurts. Make a list of any grudges you are currently holding or ill feelings you are carrying toward others. Then work through them on your own. If you need to go to anyone on the list to forgive him, do so. Then make it a point to treat others better than they treat you, not only for their sake, but also for your own.

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## TEACHABILITY EXPANDS YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *TEACHABILITY* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. How would you describe your attitude toward teachability? To get a realistic view, name all the things within the last twelve months that you initiated and followed through with in order to learn. (If your list is short, your attitude is probably not as good as you think.)
2. On a scale from 1 to 10 (with 10 the highest), how talented do you think you are in general? How talented in your area of greatest expertise? If you rate yourself above a 7 in either area, you may be prone to resist learning because of either pride or a belief that you already know “enough.” These attitudes can be a major hindrance to your teachability. To combat them, employ gratitude and laughter to help you change. For a month, keep a gratitude journal similar to the one Oprah Winfrey describes. Or make it a point to find something funny in mistakes you made in the last fourteen days and tell others about it in a humorous way. (If they look shocked or don’t laugh, it probably means you take yourself too seriously and you need to do this kind of thing often until you get different responses.)

3. For the next week, practice active listening. Make it a point to ask others for their advice and to withhold advice you would usually give. At the end of each day, write down something you learned by being attentive to others.
4. Seek out, plan, and schedule teachable moments for the next year. Select one conference to attend, one inspiring location to visit, a minimum of six books to read, another six lessons or books to listen to, and at least two important people to meet. Don't forget to create an action plan to apply what you've learned after each of these events.
5. Take the advice of Ian Harvey, CEO of London-based BTG, who asks people in his inner circle to tell him:

*Two things he should stop doing*

*Two things he should keep doing*

*Two things he should start doing*

# 10

## CHARACTER PROTECTS YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *CHARACTER* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. Have you ever taken time to identify and write down your core values? If you haven't, you need to. There is no substitute for taking what may be some vague, general notions and making them specific and tangible by putting them in writing. Taking the time to do it can change your life.
2. Most people think of integrity as being the same thing as honesty. However, if you think of integrity as *consistency*—where your values, thoughts, feelings, and actions all line up—would you still consider yourself to have high integrity? If you completed the previous exercise, you've already written your core values. How do your thoughts match up to those values? Think about the various intellectual, moral, political, or religious issues that are important to you. How about your feelings? Are they consistent with your values and thinking? What about your actions? If you need help judging your consistency, enlist the assistance of people close to you and ask them to weigh in. And if you discover inconsistencies, try to discover where the breakdowns lie.

3. How would you rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 when it comes to self-discipline (with 10 being perfect)? Is yours what you would consider to be an acceptable score? How can you improve in this area? Identify specific goals that will help you. Remember that self-discipline is a lifestyle to be achieved. The more disciplined you are in one area, the more it helps you become disciplined in others. Each victory makes you stronger.
4. Jot down the times in your life when you faced great adversity. Try to remember at least ten. Put them in chronological order. Now next to each, note your response: paralysis, escape, avoidance, endurance, perseverance, or victory. What pattern do you see? If your responses don't tend to become stronger over time and lean more toward perseverance and victory, then this is probably a problem area for you. How will you learn to better handle adversity? Through teamwork? Better health and fitness? Stronger relationships? Professional counseling? Explore the options.
5. Write down the incidents, circumstances, choices, and habits that have helped to create your character until now. Try to list everything you can think of. How many of the things on the list are beyond your control, and how many are the result of actions you took or choices you made? If many of the things you list are due to circumstances and other things beyond your control, then you need to take greater control of your life. Start by making a choice every day that will strengthen your character. (Note: these kinds of choices usually involve doing things you would rather not do.)

# 11

## RELATIONSHIPS INFLUENCE YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *RELATIONSHIPS* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. Make a list of the important people in your life. Next to each person's name, write a plus sign if the person adds value to you and a minus sign if that individual primarily takes from you. Use the questions in the chapter as criteria:
  - What does he think of me?
  - What does he think of my future?
  - How does he behave toward me in difficult times?
  - What does he bring out of me?

For people on the list who are subtractors, you will need to develop a strategy to deal with them.

If you work with some of the negative people, you will have to try to find a way to distance yourself. If that isn't possible, consider changing jobs.

If the negative people are friends or acquaintances, it's time to find new ones. Separate yourself from the people who are having a negative influence on your life, and start looking for friends who will lift you up.

If the negative people are family members, you may have to limit the amount of time you spend with them and counteract their impact by spending more time with positive people. (It's said that it takes at least five positive remarks to counteract the effects of one negative one.)

If one of the negative people is your spouse, seek professional help. It is highly unlikely that you will be able to turn around the relationship without assistance.

2. Pick the relationship that matters most to you, and evaluate it. Write two columns: "What I Give" and "What I Get." Under each column, write all the benefits you receive from your relationship and all the benefits the other person receives.

If the relationship is healthy, the two columns should balance each other. That doesn't necessarily mean they will have the same number of entries. Not all benefits are equal in value. Take that into account. But if the two columns are out of balance, you will need to make adjustments to preserve the relationship.

If you are the primary giver, then first ask yourself *why*. Second, make plans to step back and give less. Sometimes the other person has just been waiting to step up and contribute more. If the other person is the primary giver, consider how you can add more value to the relationship and take action.

3. Write a thank-you note to a pivotal person in your life, expressing your gratitude and explaining what the person has done for you and what it has meant.

# 12

## RESPONSIBILITY STRENGTHENS YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *RESPONSIBILITY* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. How good are you about taking care of the small stuff? That really is the prerequisite for being given responsibility for the big stuff. And even if you are being entrusted with huge responsibilities, you must not neglect details in your primary area of responsibility. You also never outgrow the need for responsibilities for small things with the people closest to you, such as your spouse or children. Give yourself a review. Are you taking care of the details in your job? How about at home? How often do you forget small things that are big things for your family members? It can be as big as forgetting an anniversary or birthday, or it can be as small as not picking up dry cleaning or being late for a child's game or recital. If you're neglecting small things, then get back to the basics.
2. Which of the major responsibility lessons are the toughest for you to live out with consistency?
  - *Practicing self-discipline*—denying yourself for the sake of something or someone more important. If this is your trouble area, seek assistance from someone who can lend expertise, give you



some guidelines, and help you motivate yourself. If you're lacking discipline fiscally, find someone to help you put together a budget. If your health is an issue, see a doctor. If you're overweight, talk to a trainer and a nutritionist.

- *Following through*—taking responsibilities to completion. If you have a tendency to quit, give yourself relatively small goals that require you to stretch. Start in areas where you have passion. Then with a few wins under your belt, begin tackling other areas of your life.
  - *Knowing when others are depending on you*—being there for others. People with this problem area usually lack people skills or are too self-centered. If people skills are your problem, then read a book like Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* or my book *Winning with People*. If you are too self-focused, then volunteer to help people in serious need.
  - *Stepping forward*—not expecting someone else to do what's important to you. You've already done exercises to help you tap into your passion areas, identify your core values, and so on. Review them and determine whether you are taking action in these areas. If you're not, take a bold step. Volunteer, give financially, join an organization, or start your own. Do something by the end of this week.
3. Most people have a tough decision in their jobs or personal lives that is waiting to be made. They put it off and put it off. What's yours? Why aren't you taking action? Write the reasons so that you know without a doubt what they are. Now write down the advantages of making the decision. Are there any clear, concrete, and compelling reasons for putting off the decision? If so, write them down. At this point, you know in your heart what you should do. Do it, and stand by it.

# 13

## TEAMWORK MULTIPLIES YOUR TALENT

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### TALENT + *TEAMWORK* APPLICATION EXERCISES

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1. How do you think of your talent? Is it something you own or something on loan? Why do you desire success? Do your goals primarily benefit you, or are you simply an instrument being used to benefit others? Do some soul-searching. If you think everything is all about you, you will never be a good team player.
2. What kinds of experiences have you had with teams? Think about how your experience with teams during various phases of your life has impacted your thinking. Write down the kinds of teams you were a part of as a child, as a teenager, and as a young adult. Now try to recall the significant moments, milestones, and experiences with each team. Were they primarily positive or negative? If you had some bad experiences along the way, they may be coloring your thinking and making you reluctant to engage in teamwork. Process through those experiences on the emotional level, and work on seeing the current benefits of being part of a team.

3. How strong is the sense of community on a team of which you are currently a part? Do people trust one another? Do they count on one another when it counts? If not, why not? First, take responsibility for your part in any weakness in the team, and try to make amends for past failures. Work at regaining people's trust. If you have been let down by someone else on the team, go to that person privately and talk about it. Try your best to repair the relationship and start building again.
4. How can you add value to others on your team? Think of three people on your team who you believe have high potential *and* could benefit from talent, skills, or experience you have to offer. Write out a plan for each, outlining how you could help him or her. Then approach each individual with an offer to train or mentor him or her.
5. For the next two weeks, make a commitment to yourself to take no credit for anything that goes right. Praise your employees, coworkers, colleagues, and family members for their contribution. Note the difference it makes in their performance and your relationship with them. I believe that once you've tried it, you will enjoy giving the credit away so much that it will become a regular part of your life.