



CHAPTER 7

If It Is to Be, It Is Left Up to We: The People, by People, and for the People

THE FIFTH BOARDROOM LANGUAGE

The final boardroom boldness language is to *step it up* as depicted in figure 7.1. This principle can be found in the latter part of 1 Chronicles 21:16, “Then David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. So David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces.” For the first time in the text, one can discover the activity and initiative of the elders. Seemingly these senior statesmen of the nation had seen enough destruction, were done with being passive followers and were now ready to step it up with engaged followership. However, the question becomes, “What specifically does step it up look like for the twenty-first-century influencer?” To answer this question, the attention of the reader will be focused on the biblical case of Moses as the nation of Israel was battling Amalek.

And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.¹² But Moses’ hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.¹³ So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (Ex 17:11–13)

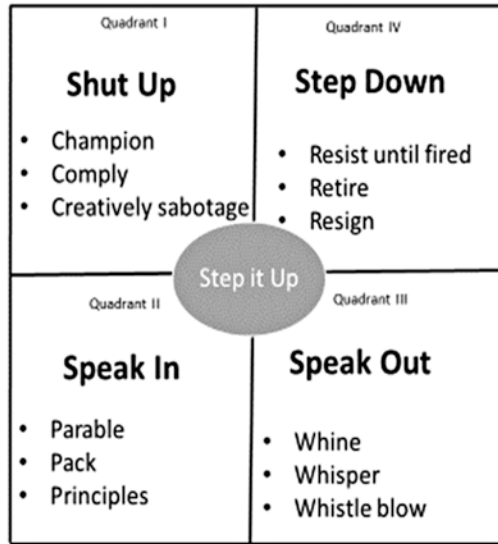


Fig. 7.1 Boardroom boldness language model—quadrant V

UNITY OF EFFORT

The first lesson that can be abstracted from the elders in this text is that these followers understood that they were the difference between national failure and victory. As Aaron and Hur watched the momentum of the fight change to the opposition, it was as if they knew they were the key. No one else had the status, the proximity to the leader, or the wisdom to navigate the moment. In a similar vein, this was the predicament of the elders around David as they saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. When history calls, bold followers understand that they become Plan A, and that Plan B was to make Plan A work.

The success or demise of a Plan A hinges on how well bold followers step it up with a unity of effort. Paul Michael Severance’s doctoral dissertation, *Characterizing the Construct of Organizational Unity of Effort in the Interagency National Security Policy Process*, provides a framework for this construct. Severance explains that “unity of effort in this respect essentially

establishes who does what to whom.”¹ Moreover, Severance’s research unearths a model that can help followers formulate the appropriate engagement approach. The first component of the model is strategic orientation, in which it is imperative for the team to have a clearly defined and integrated strategy, and that team members are fully invested up and down the chain of command. Additionally, the strategic orientation needs to be grounded on a compelling vision for the future that is book-ended with clear goals, objectives, purposes, and mission.

The second element of Severance’s model is organizational context and interpersonal dynamics. The premise of this leg of the unity of effort can arguably be tied to 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13, in which the Apostle Paul admonishes, “to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.” The operative word in this text is *know them*, οἶδα, which can be translated as to examine, inspect, or to make an acquaintance. The result of adhering to this theological mandate is the elevation of trust, rapport, respect, and a richer understanding of the values of the team. Additionally, Severance encourages meaningful interagency training and education.

The third and perhaps most critical aspect of the model is the leadership and decision-making structure. Key questions have to be resolved, “What will the lines of authority be? What would be the directive of such authority and what would be the nature and the flow of leadership?” In a similar vein, the final leg of this model would be the organizational infrastructure and resources. That is, followers need to understand the budgets associated with the engagement, exactly who and how it would be funded. The entity would need to think through measures of effectiveness and how the organization will say thank you, as well as how to motivate her citizens.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Genesis 11:6 reveals the power of unity of effort. To recap, “And the LORD said, ‘Indeed the people *are* one, and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them’.” In this text, the entire world was one and spoke the same language. Unfortunately, their strategic orientation was flawed, as epitomized by their desire to build a city, to build a tower up to heaven, and to make a

¹Severance, Paul Michael. 2005. *Characterizing the Construct of Organizational Unity of Effort in the Interagency National Security Policy Process*. Falls Virginia: Proquest Doctoral Dissertation. p. 6.

name for themselves (Gen 11:4). Although this was not the will of God for them, the Lord acknowledged that when people are one—nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.

THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW

What the reader will not discover in the Exodus 17:11–13 passage is a competition for recognition. On the contrary, these elders seemingly could not care less who got the credit as long as God received the glory. Such a mindset is often the byproduct of the fierce urgency of now. Martin Luther King Jr. best captured the meaning of this second concept when he said, “We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there ‘is’ such a thing as being too late. This is not time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.” When followers embrace the mindset that tomorrow is today, a bias for action naturally springs forth.

John P. Kotter, in *A Sense of Urgency*, explains the urgency principle with more granularity. More specifically, Kotter’s research discovered that one could invoke four tactics to help create earnestness. The first concept revolves around bringing the *outside in*. This phrase points toward moving an organization from being complacent by only looking within at past accomplishments, as opposed to exploring outward possibilities. Second, Kotter contends that one should behave with urgency every day. This posture could be a contagious gesture to help keep the passion burning within to accomplish the mission. The third finding of Kotter’s revolved around the notion of finding opportunities in crises. Whenever change is being incorporated, there is a high probability of strategy not surviving initial contact. To this end, the urgent follower understands how to locate chance in the midst of chaos. Finally, Kotter contends that one can keep applying urgency by incorporating resolve into the culture.

More practically speaking, the fierce urgency of now can be likened to a house being on fire with people inside. Because of the threat of flames and smoke, the people within the home have a single perspective, to leave that house safely and then to put the flames out quickly. The urgency of the moment that was created by the blaze suspends any hidden agendas, tames out of control egos, and galvanizes everyone to keep to the main thing. In this spirit, Aaron and Hur, and the elders around David, understood that their “house” was burning and moved with a sense of urgency to get out of the threat and to suppress the flames.

FASTING AND PRAYER

Aaron and Hur intuitively understood that victory had little to do with the warfare tactics of the forces under Joshua's leadership and more to do with being connected to the Lord. To this end, these bold followers activated the third aspect of the *step it up* boardroom language—fasting and prayer. These followers quickly made the connection of Moses' arms being lifted as a picture of prayer. Due to Aaron's role as the first high priest of Israel, one could reasonably infer that this follower was well acquainted with the power of fasting and prayer. As recorded in Mark 9:14–29, a man brought his son to Jesus' disciples that had a condition that caused him to throw himself down, foam at the mouth, gnash his teeth, and make him rigid. The disciples were unable to help the child, so the parent brought his son to Jesus, who exercised his authority and healed the child. Later, Jesus explained to his disciples why they were unsuccessful by saying, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

This component of the step it up boardroom language can be utilized strategically. To illustrate, the book of Esther explains that a sinister plot was set in motion to commit genocide on the entire nation of Israel. Esther, was divinely positioned as the new queen but her Jewish nationality was concealed. At the appropriate moment her mentor and cousin, Mordecai, advised her in Esther 4:13–14 of the plot by saying, "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?" Esther's response of was not that of panic nor of human endeavor. On the contrary, Esther replied to Mordecai by saying, in verse 16, "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" It was this follower's boldness, coupled with the language of fasting and prayer, that allowed God to intervene.

One can also see this form of stepping it up emerge early in the Constitutional Convention of 1787. As the newly liberated country struggled to draft the right language that would guide the country forward, the efforts of the founding fathers were frustrated. It was within the context of being foiled that Benjamin Franklin admonished the framers to pray. He specifically exhorted the assembly with the following words,

In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understanding? In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor... And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured, sir, in the Sacred Writings, that ‘except the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it.’ I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business.²

The outcome of this admonishment has set democracy on the path that has surpassed the imaginations of the naysayers.

PROACTIVITY

Akin to fasting and praying is the fourth aspect of stepping it up—proactivity. Stephen R. Covey, in his classic book *The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons In Personal Change* defines proactivity in a distinguished manner. Covey suggests that it is the ability to subordinate an impulse to a value or to understand that a person is “response-able” or has the responsibility to use their resources and initiative to answer a problem.³ Moreover, proactive people are not driven by feelings, by circumstance, by conditions, or by their environment.⁴ Although the atmosphere that Aaron and Hur saw was indeed bleak, they did not choose to play the

²Farrand, Max. 1911. *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, Vol. I*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp. 450–452, from James Madison’s notes on the Convention for June 28, 1787.

³Covey, Stephen R. 2013. *The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons In Personal Change*. New York: RosettaBooks.

⁴Ibid. p. 79.

blame game and spend precious amounts of time assigning fault. Neither did these followers default to that favorite conventional pastime of criticizing and pointing out obvious problems. On the contrary, Aaron and Hur stepped it up by using their resourcefulness and initiative to make an impact. How? They located a stone and put it under Moses, and they used their strength to support the hands of their leader until the battle was won.

PROJECT BOLD FOLLOWERSHIP

As the reader's attention is returned to the elders around David, there seems to be a model that followers can embrace to positively influence today's organizations that are being crippled by king-think. If a leader refuses to become reflective, even though the team is on the brink of demise, then the organization's citizens are morally bound to step it up and shape the conditions for a nonviolent workplace revolution. The etymology of the word revolution means to revolve, rotate or to roll back. As depicted in Figure 7.2, the step it up model synthesizes the various constructs unearthed in this study to mitigate mayhem.

Said another way, there are leaders within organizations who are running followers, team legacy, and fundamental values to the ground, all in the name of egoism. Organizational citizens do not have to witness and softly endorse such madness by remaining silent and passive. On the contrary, followers do have the power to rotate, revolve, and even roll back the likes of the modern-day Jim Jones, Jeffery Skilling, and Ken Lay out of power. The findings of this book suggest that when followers coalesce around a clear unity of effort, in the sentiments of the Lord, "nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them." (Gen 11:6) This mindset, coupled with a fierce urgency of now, can help influencers to realize

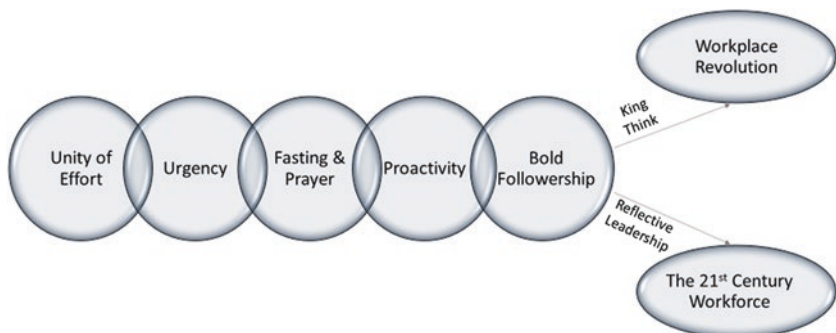


Fig. 7.2 The step it up model

that there “is” such a thing as being too late. When a follower accepts this reality, they can appeal higher with fasting and prayer for who knows what; they too may have come into the kingdom for such a time as this.

After followers, like the founding fathers at the Constitutional Conference, fervently seek the mind of God, they must rise from their knees and proactively engage with bold followership. More specifically, organizational citizens can speak with one voice and stage project bold followership (PBF). PBF can be defined as speaking nonviolently and simultaneously a hybrid of the boardroom boldness language in the organization until revolution ensues. That is, a proportion of followers can begin to speak the specific boardroom language of *shut up* as they *creatively sabotage* immoral practices implemented by leaders. Concurrently, those providentially placed within the king’s court can first study to understand the king’s preferred communication method and then boldly *speak in*, which should invoke a *parable*, embrace *packs* or *principles*, the message must be clear.

While a portion of the team is shutting up with the principles of creative sabotaging and speaking in, other key followers can massively *speak out*. The acts of *whispering* and *whistleblowing* can help to bring dark issues to the light for the purposes of pricking public conscience. Moreover, influential followers in the leader’s administration can elect to *step down* due to the ethical climate that has been established. The sum total is to help to create the conditions for transformation with nonviolent means before employing direct action if a sustained campaign has carefully: (1) collected facts to determine whether injustices are alive; (2) negotiated to resolve the leader and led issues; (3) employed self-purification to assure it is not a followership issue.

LEADING A TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY ORGANIZATION

One of the interesting things to note at this point is the amount of energy, time, and capital that would be required to get a leader to become reflective. Nevertheless, such an effort would be well worth the proceeding if the lives of the team are positively enhanced. Assuming PBF achieves the objective of breaking the fever of king-think and moves such a personality to a place of remorsefulness, the question now becomes, “Is the only solution to accept their resignation?” This is a tricky question that will require the collective discernment of the followers of the campaign. What it is clearer to resolve entails the caliber of leadership for the twenty-first-century organization.

As the globe becomes flatter, the speed of information increases, and trust becomes the new currency, the role and voice of followership will be paramount. To effectively mobilize the talent and release the power of *we the people*, the personality entrusted with leading teams in the future must be reflective. Reflective leaders see themselves as stewards of treasures, not as saviors who are entitled to special treatment. A stewardship perspective acknowledges that one has been given temporary authority to care for a thing and has an obligation to return what was entrusted, in a better condition. Additionally, reflective leaders have a natural propensity to serve followers first, the organization next, and have a bias for organizational and personal learning. It is upon the pathway of pressing toward the mark (Phil 3:14), or being committed to personal learning, that one becomes self-aware of ones little foxes, grows, reconciles when wrong, and challenges others to walk in excellence as one strives for the same bar of righteousness.

As illustrated in Figure 7.3, reflective leadership champions organizational learning by keeping an ear first on the voice of God and then on the boardroom languages of followership. More specifically, when followers begin to *shut up*, reflective influencers *lead with prudent questions* to try to connect with the hearts of the people. When team members in the inner court begin to speak in boldly, the reflective influencer *listens with empathy*. This gesture, when done sincerely, conveys a powerful message of value to the communicator. When followers begin to speak out actively, those entrusted with being a steward of an institution will *learn with a level head*. This ability to not get defensive nor appalled about the voices



Fig. 7.3 The reflective leadership model

of the marginalized, but rather to learn about the “why” is a key trademark of a reflective leader.

When the elders of an institution begin to *step down* by submitting conscientious letters of resignation, reflective leaders *locate a team of rivals*. Because they are secure, wise, and humble enough to know that there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors (Pro 16:22), these leaders actively seek out those who think critically (i.e., challenge principles) but do not have a critical spirit (i.e., demean people’s character out of spite). Finally, when followers begin to step it up aggressively, reflective leaders *leverage with empowerment*. Said differently, those vested with the special trust and confidence to lead the twenty-first-century organization understand that the ultimate success of the team will not flow from the top down but from the grassroots of we the people, by the people, and for the people.

BOARDROOM BOLDNESS CHATS

#MeToo

It has come to your attention that someone in top leadership sexually assaulted a person in your organization whom you have mentored for the past four years. The accused has been in power for one year and by all accounts seems to be doing a good job administratively. You have actionable knowledge that at least nine other people were victimized by this leader but are afraid to engage because they do not want to lose their jobs and do not necessarily want the attention; but you also know that others will be traumatized if nothing happens. Your mentee mentions a campaign called #MeToo and reluctantly signals they would like to do something, but need your help.



Fig. 7.4 The spectrum of the “step it up” boardroom language

1. While reflecting on the case of #MeToo, have a discussion on what the victim's options and the implications of doing nothing are.
2. Have a discussion on the meaning and the possible application of *stepping it up* in this case. Within your discussion, be sure to think through the implications of a leader who refuses to be remorseful.
3. Have a discussion on the implications of such a person becoming a reflective leader. Is reflection enough to keep that person in power, or should they be forced to resign?
4. Have a discussion on the most crucial element of the *step it up model* as depicted in Fig. 7.4 and why?
5. As organizations engage with the future, have a discussion on the importance of reflective leadership being at the helm.