

“Wonderful . . . crucial to the success of any leader, in any organization, in any industry.”

—FROM THE FOREWORD BY STEPHEN M.R. COVEY

*Becoming Your*  
**Best**

THE 12 PRINCIPLES OF  
HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL  
LEADERS

STEVEN R. SHALLENBERGER

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New York Chicago San Francisco Athens London Madrid  
Mexico City Milan New Delhi Singapore Sydney Toronto

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## Introduction

Years ago, when I was fresh out of college, I managed 300 employees, and I wanted to find ways to inspire and lead them. I started looking for common factors that could be found in accomplished people and industry-leading organizations. I thought to myself, if there was a common denominator for success and if I could teach it to our employees, what would that do for our company? This question started me on a journey of research to identify the factors or traits that set apart peak-performing people, leaders, and organizations.

After 40 years of intensive research, my team and I have identified a common denominator for success. This is a set of traits and factors found over and over in high-achieving people and organizations. These are the principles that are embodied by accomplished leaders. I've narrowed down that list to 12 of the most critical factors. I commonly refer to these principles as *guiding constants* because they will consistently guide you and your team to a better place, and because they are constant—they transcend culture and time, and they are especially needed in a rapidly changing world.

In the process of identifying the 12 principles, I came across many types of people. I found that many of those who had the outward appearance of success were often struggling with an inner desire to achieve a greater sense of personal peace, accomplishment, and meaning, and also to maintain happy and productive relationships.

I was initially surprised by some of the comments I received from successful people, until it became apparent that we all have our own challenges and struggles. I began to realize that challenges come in every shape and size, yet they are part of the shared human experience. Do any of these real comments from people I've associated with sound familiar?

- How do I improve communication and accountability, both personally and professionally?
- E-mails, telephone calls, messages, high-pressure projects with deadlines now, and absolutely no end in sight. How do I manage it all?
- A CEO said: I just had the best year ever in our company, but I got divorced during the year. Was my best year ever in business really worth the cost in terms of what happened in my personal life?
- Our company has been number one in our industry for years. How do we avoid complacency and stay number one?
- I feel that I can contribute more at work—I feel underemployed. How can I become one of the most valued employees and feel that I am giving my best, regardless of the circumstances I feel that I am in?
- I have a strained relationship with my wife and children—I don't even talk with one of my sons anymore. How can I restore these important relationships?
- I am addicted to prescription drugs. I am buying prescriptive drugs under the table illegally. Nobody really knows. I am not the person I used to be.
- How do we defend against disruptive threats and develop opportunities in a rapidly changing world?

Maybe you can relate to one or two of these circumstances, or maybe you have someone close to you who is dealing with one of these situations. The promise of this book is that it will give you and your team hope, encouragement, and a positive pathway for resolving issues like these. We've designed a blueprint for building a culture of excellence. This isn't another flavor-of-the-month self-help program. This blueprint is designed to help you and your team to realize sustainable excellence.

*Becoming Your Best* is not about comparing yourself to another person. It is about becoming your best!

Think about this: out there in the world, there are those who are trying to figure out how to put you out of business or do what you do better than you are doing it; in other words, they're coming up with a "disruptive" technology or service. We've found that those who live by the guiding constants create a culture of excellence in their organizations. This culture of excellence allows those people and businesses to be disruptive in a competitive business world rather than being disrupted and rendered irrelevant.

## The Guiding Constants—the 12 Principles of Highly Successful Leaders

For centuries, mariners and explorers have relied on the heavens for navigation because the stars never change their position. For thousands of years, Polaris, or the North Star (see Figure I.1) has

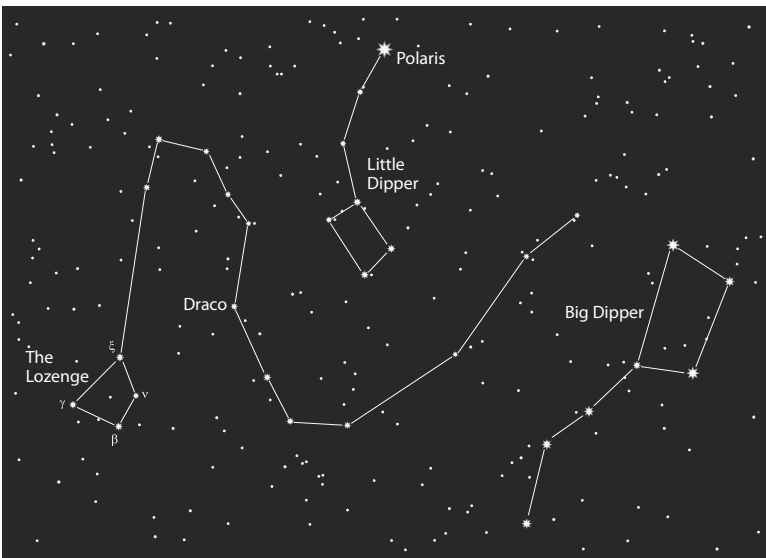


FIGURE I.1 The North Star

been available, unmoving and constant, to anyone who looked to it. Those who know how can still use it to find their way.

Just as countless people throughout history have understood key principles and used the appropriate tools to achieve extraordinary results—in flight, medicine, communication, electricity, engineering, and sports, to name a few areas—so each of us can come to understand the key principles that bring about success in life. The laws that affect your success in life are just as timeless, universal, and dependable as the North Star. They work over and over and over!

This is why I chose the term *guiding constants* for these principles: because they are as constant as the stars in the heavens. When you understand and master these constants and use the associated processes and tools effectively, you will achieve significant results on your journey to become your best. You'll see a significant transformation begin to take place in your teams and throughout your organizations as these principles become part of the culture.

Why is it that certain individuals, teams, relationships, organizations, communities, and even countries falter and fail while others persevere and prosper? What makes the difference? What leads some to high levels of performance while others struggle at the opposite end?

I believe that the 12 principles truly make the difference. Sustainable health, happiness, and prosperity stem from mastery of these principles of highly successful leaders. The flow of materials in this book is designed to help you master each one of them, both individually and in your organization. The book is divided into three parts that build on what I consider to be some of the most important areas of our lives.

In Part One, I'll discuss the principles of transformational leadership and management—character, vision, plan, and prioritizing your time.

In Part Two, I'll review the principles of transformational teams and relationships—kindness, trust, communication, and imagination.

And in Part Three, I'll share the keys to transformational living—the principles of accountability, knowledge, peace and balance, and persistence.

## **The Becoming Your Best Blueprint: How to Apply the 12 Principles**

In order to achieve sustainable excellence, you need the right culture to support your strategy. So, how do you create a culture of excellence and develop the right strategy? I've been asked that question repeatedly by leaders, and also another very important question: "How can I make this sustainable for my company so that it's not just a flavor of the month? A lot of training companies have good material, but it's tough to implement. How do we implement this?"

To answer both of those questions, we've created the Becoming Your Best blueprint. This blueprint is results-based and is designed to help you, your family, or your organization implement the 12 principles. It involves simply focusing on one principle a week, personally or as a team, then taking a week to reflect on the results. Do this for 13 weeks, then start over and repeat the process ( $13 \times 4 = 52$  weeks). In other words, by focusing on just one principle a week, you'll go through the whole cycle four times a year.

Individually or as a team member or leader, you can focus on one principle each week and ask the question: How can I—or how can we as a team—improve in this area this week? Once you've finished going through each of the 12 principles, spend the thirteenth week reflecting on the lessons you have learned and how and where you have changed. Then, go back and start on the first principle again, this time with an expanded and improved view.

If you haven't already visited our website at [www.BecomingYourBest.com](http://www.BecomingYourBest.com), I invite you to enter your first name and e-mail address to receive a weekly e-mail, free of charge, related to each principle. The point of these e-mails is to support you and your teams as you use the blueprint. They're meant to help you establish

a culture of excellence with your teams and to help these principles become habits in your personal life.

Each weekly e-mail will have a story illustrating that principle and a weekly action item that you can physically do during the week. You can adapt this to do whatever works best for you or your company. It's fun. It's exciting. It just takes desire and effort!

Business leaders love the blueprint because it is simple to implement, and yet its power and the results that it produces in their organizations are significant!

Many organizations have incorporated our blueprint and experienced tremendous results. One company that we've worked with had a 70 percent increase in revenue in just one year. The company's employees were once unhappy and disgruntled; now they are more fulfilled and doing their jobs better than ever before.

The leaders of this company cite the blueprint as the reason for their success and transformation. They have their employees get together at the beginning of each week for about five minutes to discuss a principle, and then they focus on that guiding constant throughout the week. Over time, this has had a significant influence on everyone associated with that organization—it has helped create a culture of excellence.

I've heard similar stories from many other organizations who found a way to use the blueprint with their teams and employees. Interestingly, I've also heard of people who've used this blueprint while coaching a youth sports team and I've even heard of it being used with students in a classroom. You can adapt it to whatever circumstance you're in. The point is to focus on one principle a week and over time, you and your teams can experience a significant transformation.

It is my desire that people and organizations attain principled goals. It is my desire that relationships be happy and strong, with high levels of trust. And it is my desire that all people—including you—experience the satisfaction and thrill of becoming the best they can be. Remember, your best is yet to be, and one person can make a difference!

## About the Author

**S**teve **Shallenberger** has more than 40 years of experience as a successful business owner, trusted senior executive, professional corporate trainer, and respected community leader. He has lived in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Mexico, and Spain for over five years doing humanitarian service.

After graduating from Brigham Young University in 1976, Steve launched Eagle Systems International, a global leadership and management consulting firm. He has successfully led companies in three different industries and has a keen understanding of how to thrive in business. During those formative years in his business career, he continued his education at the Harvard Business School. Steve also worked many years with his dear friend Stephen R. Covey. As a key leader, among others, he helped build the world-renowned Covey Leadership Center.

Steve served as president of the Brigham Young University Alumni Association. He was the president of America's Freedom Foundation and he currently serves on their board of trustees. He was a charter member and chair of the Utah chapter of the Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) and is actively involved in the World Presidents' Organization (WPO).

Steve is passionate about his family, having fun, and helping others achieve their potential in life. Steve's success is due to his unique ability to connect with people at personal, interpersonal, and managerial levels in an effective and practical way. He has devoted his life to building people, businesses, and organizations and increasing their prosperity and happiness.

## About Becoming Your Best Global Leadership

**A**n innovator in leadership and corporate training, *Becoming Your Best* takes leadership training and team development to a new level using our results-driven success blueprint. It's been 40 years in the making and countless key executives, organizations, athletes, teachers, and individuals worldwide have come to rely on these principles and processes. It's the award-winning training and success blueprint that has been lauded by business leaders around the world because they've finally found a proven program to implement these critical success principles.

Whether in a keynote, seminar, or executive coaching, we give leaders and their teams the tools and know-how to break down performance barriers and be the disruptive company in their industry. When collectively applied, our signature 12 principles will have a profound impact on the revenue, culture, innovation, and productivity of any organization in any industry.

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