

Smart Leadership

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Have you ever been in Quicksand? Maybe not in the wilds of Africa or outback in Australia, but I think you have... a different kind of quicksand.

What are the things that are holding you back? What are the challenges you face on a regular basis that are impeding your effectiveness? Some of the usual suspects are busyness, distractions, growing complexity, and the like. In other cases, the elements of your quicksand are not as obvious in the moment. For some leaders, success, complacency, aimlessness, and fear are real issues limiting their impact. What do you do if these, or other things, are limiting your leadership effectiveness?

When a leader finds himself/herself in quicksand, there are really only three options:

1. **Sink** – This is what happens when we give up. Our hopes, dreams, aspirations, and influence are extinguished.
2. **Swim** – This is what leaders going through the motions with little to show for it do. The fundamental problem with this approach is that it does not allow you to realize your full potential, nor is it sustainable.
3. **Escape** – This is the strategy of Smart Leaders. These women and men have figured out how to move beyond the encumbrances of the day and lead at a higher level.

Our team set out to learn how some leaders always find a way to rise above the quicksand that destroys so many others. We learned that quicksand is actually *not* the enemy ... we are! Our lack of thoughtful, strategic action keeps us in its ever-tightening grip.

The path out of the quagmire is paved with our choices. Smart Leaders make four Smart Choices that enable them to lead from higher ground. Below is a quick working definition for each choice and a few questions to help you get started.

Smart Choice #1 Confront Reality

- Confront Reality to stay grounded in the truth and lead from a position of strength.
What is true about your leadership?
- What is true about your team?
- What is true about your relationships?
- What is true about your health?
- What is true about your finances?

Smart Choice #2 Grow Capacity

Grow capacity to meet the demands of the moment and the challenges of the future.

- How much of a priority is margin in your life?

- When do you reflect, assess, think, create, and plan?
- How does your current structure enhance or impede your capacity?
- What are you doing intentionally to lift and manage your personal energy?
- What could you eliminate from your calendar next week with no ill effect?

Smart Choice #3 Fuel Curiosity

Fuel curiosity to maintain relevance and vitality in a changing world.

- Where do you receive your inspiration to lead?
- Who have you met with recently who stretched your thinking?
- Who will you talk to within the next 30 days to expand your world?
- What would happen if you asked twice as many questions as you do currently?
- What are your top five favorite questions?

Smart Choice #4 Create Change

- Create change today to ensure a better tomorrow.
- What in your life do you want to be true in a decade that is not true today?
- What is your vision for your team and/or organization?
- What project or problem do you need to focus on to drive your long-term success?
- What tools do you have at your disposal to create positive change? What one thing could you change to make your life and leadership more effective?

Your Superpower

At the beginning of the Harry Potter movies, there was a pivotal scene. On the evening of Harry's twelfth birthday, Hagrid went to pick up the boy to take him to Hogwarts, so he could develop his skills as a wizard. The problem was that Harry did not know he was a wizard.

Do you remember the scene? Hagrid said, "Harry, yer a wizard."

Can you imagine all that was going through young Harry's mind? At that moment, the potential and promise of his gift might have seemed overwhelming. He was likely flooded with a blend of skepticism and possibility.

As I conclude this post, there is good news for you. You are also a wizard! Like Harry, you have a superpower — your choices. When you consistently make Smart Choices your default response in the midst of your daily life, your impact will increase, and you can literally change your world.