

Introduction

If everybody did their best, 95% of the problems would remain.

—W. Edwards Deming (1992)

Optimize Your School weaves together four leadership themes: (1) 4th-Level Leadership, (2) Top-Down/Bottom-Up Leadership, (3) Continuous Improvement, and (4) Servant Leadership. The application of these four themes apply equally well to the classroom; the principal's office; the district's human resources, instruction, and finance offices; and the board and superintendent's decisions.

4TH-LEVEL LEADERSHIP

Level 1: I'll just do the job by myself.

Level 2: I'm in charge; do it the way I tell you.

Level 3: I'll meet with you in the beginning of the year to agree upon your objectives. Then I'll meet with you again near the end of the year to see if you met your objectives.

Level 4: We are a team working together toward optimizing everybody's talent and 100 percent of our responsibilities.

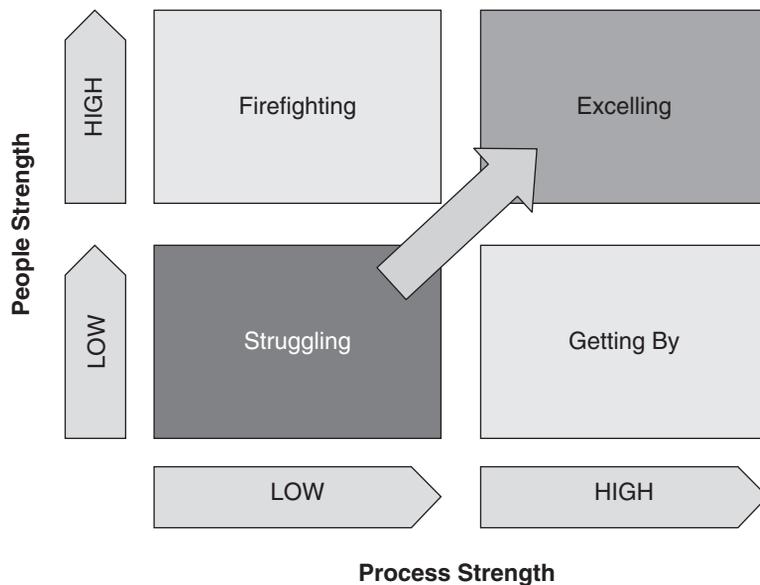
TOP-DOWN/BOTTOM-UP LEADERSHIP

Jeffrey Liker and James K. Franz (2011) developed a matrix for all types of organizations (see Figure 1). Their matrix is not exclusively for schools. I include their matrix here to communicate to readers where I see the

basic issues with schools today; they are firefighting, dealing with the same problems over and over. Almost all schools are hampered by poor strategies and processes. The staffs are dedicated and talented but cannot move ahead because of the strategies and processes. I share this observation at the beginning of this book because I want readers to know I am not trying to fix, manipulate, or incentivize the staffs. I am writing to help fix decades of failed processes. That said, Chapter 13 is about personnel. People can improve. However, even the personnel chapter is about strategy and process for the human resources department.

For years education had a bottom-up leadership theory. Decentralization was the prevailing structure. Each school selected its own staff, curriculum, and materials. Employees were generally happy, but society became unhappy as other countries by-passed America. Top-down was the perceived solution. We even went so far as to mandate a Soviet-style structure; every classroom was to be on the same page on the same day. Society still isn't pleased and the employees are discouraged and angry. Top-down is not a successful theory of leadership. Top-down/bottom-up, however, is a successful theory of leadership.

Figure 1 Liker's Organizational Matrix



Source: *The Toyota Way to Continuous Improvement* (p. 40), by J. Liker and J. K. Franz, 2011, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT LEADERSHIP

The major differences between typical leadership and continuous improvement leadership are the absence of quotas and internal competition. People are held accountable for improvement and work together as a team to create that improvement. Numeric goals, with continuous improvement, are to outperform prior accomplishments. People do not waste time agreeing upon an arbitrary number to meet in the future. The number is simply better than ever before. The time is better spent agreeing upon improvement strategies.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

John Maxwell's "dos and do nots" begin Chapter 1. These basic attitudes are essential for both 4th-level leadership, top-down/bottom-up leadership, and continuous improvement leadership. Without servant leadership, none of the three other themes make sense and optimization will not occur.

SCHOOLS ARE AT ONE OF FOUR LEVELS

Schools are at one of four levels: (1) at risk of surviving, (2) getting along, (3) excelling, or (4) optimized. At-risk schools have a multiple-year record of failure. They are plagued by rotating leadership and often have more advisors than staff members. Getting-along schools are neither improving nor backsliding; their results are better than other schools, so people generally leave them alone. Excelling schools have high success rates, some of the best achievement results in the area, and are considered superb by most people. Optimized schools can prove all students improved and that most students exceeded state standards. In addition, they have captured the 25 to 33 percent of each school year that is currently utilized for review and reapportioned the time for the arts or acceleration. Liker and Meier (2006) wrote, "Companies . . . reduce the time significantly, but there is no plan for using the freed up time, and the setup times slowly creep back to the original level." The same is true for schools. If the time saved by removing "Permission to Forget" is not reallocated to the arts or to acceleration, the gains will slowly disappear.

Continuous strategic improvement and the practical advice contained in this book will give leaders the knowledge to move their schools from at risk to getting along to excelling and even onto optimization. This will take everybody working together toward a common aim, top-down/bottom-up

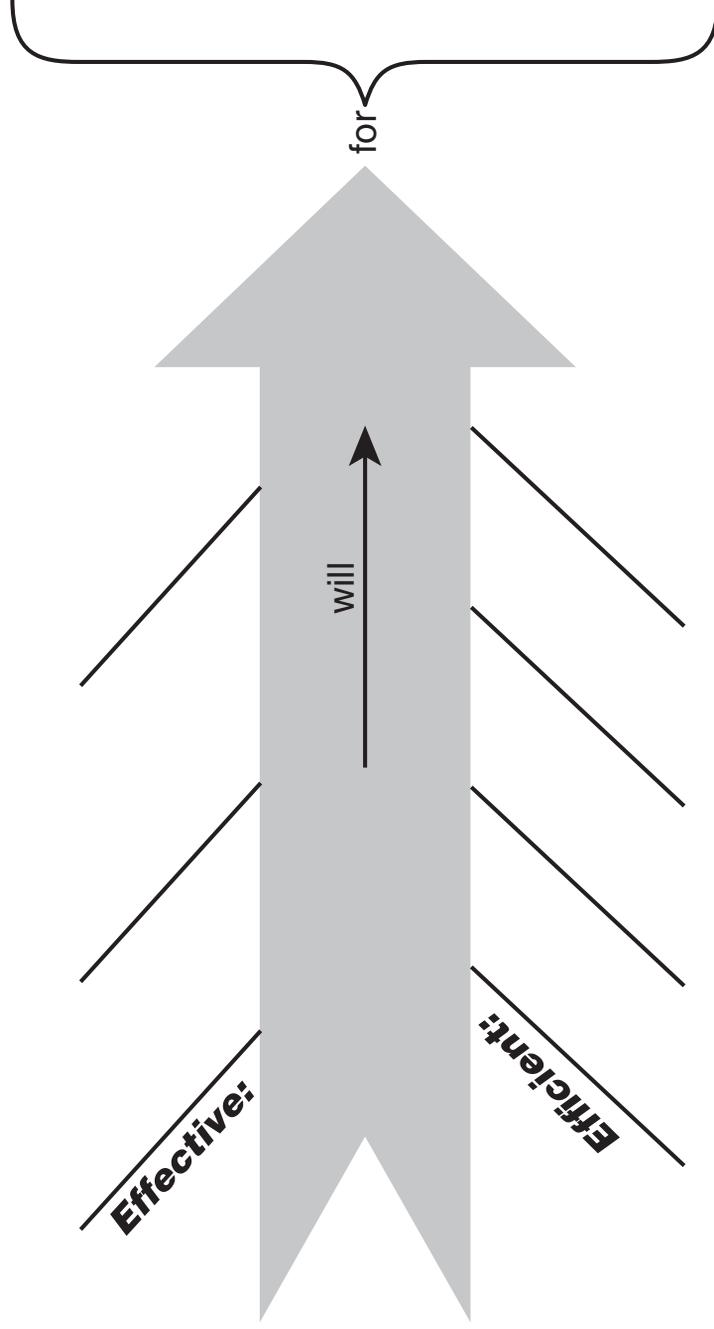
behavior, a record of getting better and better, and a plethora of servant leaders in the classroom and administrative offices.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Throughout this book, two graphic organizers are provided to help readers have a picture of the text progression. The first is a fishbone and the second is a 2×2 matrix. The Optimization Fishbone was designed to create a sense of motion toward an aim. The aim here is optimization of the school system and thus many aspects of this book are included on the fishbone. In the beginning, the fishbone will be partial with a completed fishbone in the later portions of the book. The Optimization Matrix will also gradually develop and display elements of optimization, and its opposite, sub-optimization.

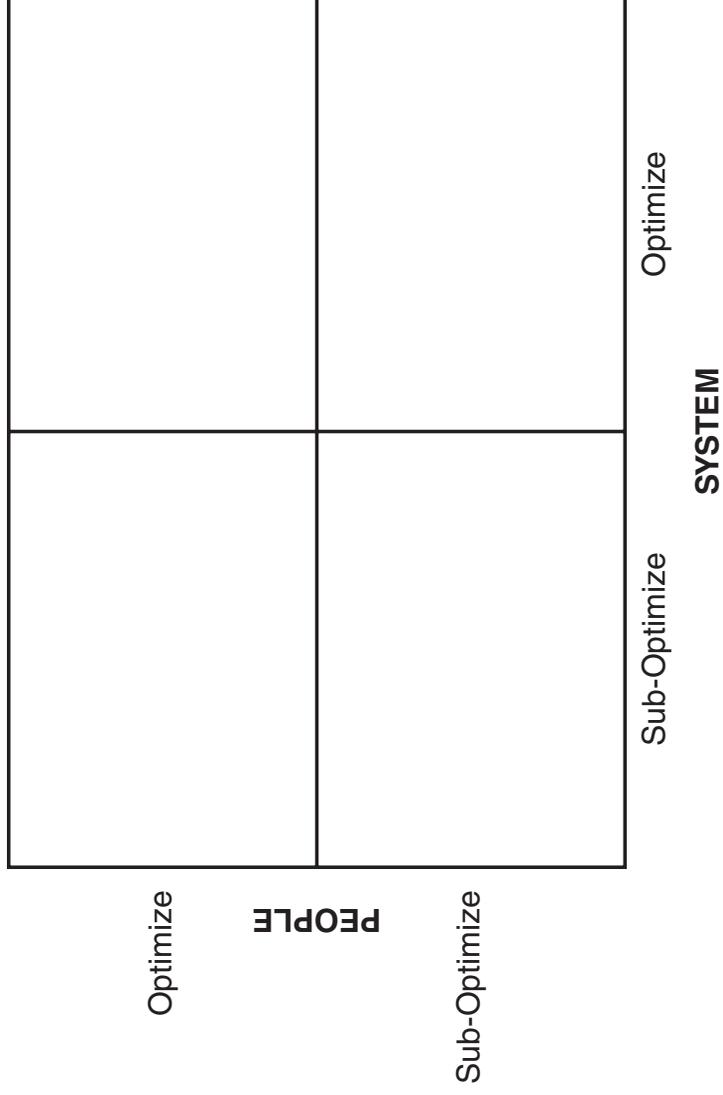
Figure 2 is the blank Optimization Fishbone. Figure 3 is the blank Optimization Matrix.

Figure 2 Optimization Fishbone



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Figure 3 Optimization Matrix



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