

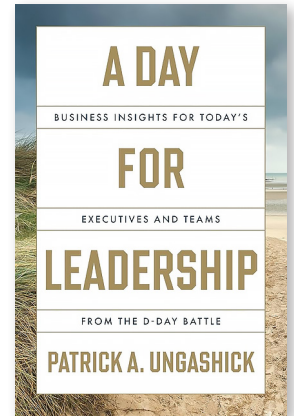


Executive Book Summaries[®]

A Day for Leadership

Business Insights for Today's Executives and Teams
From the D-Day Battle

by **Patrick A. Ungashick**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Business executives often seek powerful, real-world examples to sharpen their leadership skills and steer their organizations and teams to sustained growth and success. *In A Day for Leadership: Business Insights for Today's Executives and Teams from the D-Day Battle*, Patrick A. Ungashick turns to one of history's most pivotal moments, D-Day, to uncover lessons that resonate in today's corporate world.

D-Day, the launch of the most complex military operation in history that ultimately led to Allied victory in World War II, was the product of years of planning and the coordinated efforts of millions. Yet, its success hinged on a small group of leaders making high-stakes decisions under extreme pressure. Ungashick explores how elements such as strategy, culture, logistics, delegation, and execution shaped the outcome, and how these same principles can guide business leaders in navigating competitive markets and complex challenges.

Drawing from his experience as an entrepreneur, advisor, and author, Ungashick presents the battle's leadership stories as a playbook for executives, entrepreneurs, and teams, offering actionable insights to elevate performance and achieve strategic goals.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Understand how to apply strategic planning principles from D-Day to your organization's toughest challenges.
- Build a resilient team culture capable of thriving under pressure.
- Master delegation to ensure the right people make the right decisions at the right time.
- Find out how to make decisive calls when timing and clarity are critical to success.

INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, June 6, 1944, the pivotal operation that would decide the outcome of humanity's largest war commenced. On that day, forever known as D-Day, about 156,000 American, British, and Canadian soldiers with 20,000 vehicles invaded the Normandy coast in German-occupied France, transported and escorted by a seaborne fleet of 7,000 ships and seacraft and an airborne armada of 11,000 planes. Within a month, more than one million soldiers representing those three Allied nations, plus a dozen others, stood ashore in France, engaged in a vast struggle that ten months later achieved the final downfall of Germany's heinous Nazi regime. D-Day was the greatest combined amphibious-airborne invasion in history and the most complex military operation ever executed.

This book's purpose is to present and examine leadership moments that both entertain and educate today's business owners, executives, and managers. Our leadership laboratory will be one of the most famous and important battles of World War II—the Allied invasion of Normandy, France, code-named Operation Overlord.

This book is written for business owners, executives, leaders, and managers. The core content consists of case studies providing readers with insights and lessons relevant to real-world leadership roles and responsibilities. Case studies unlock conversations and foster individual and team development. They can:

1. Enhance problem-solving skills.
2. Apply theoretical knowledge.
3. Improve decision-making.
4. Promote learning from successes and failures.
5. Encourage collaborative learning.
6. Develop communication skills.
7. Build a learning organization.

CASE STUDY ONE

Readying the Big Red One CREATING ELITE CULTURE

Operation Overlord's senior leaders, starting at the top with Supreme Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower, had specifically assigned Omaha Beach on D-Day to General Clarence R. Huebner's 1st Infantry Division, also known as the Big Red One in reference to the division's

distinct shoulder patch with a red number one. The Big Red One was America's foremost division in name and fame, having already spearheaded two Allied amphibious invasions earlier in the war. Eisenhower would entrust only the elite Big Red One with Omaha Beach, the most heavily defended and isolated of D-Day's five target beaches. And the Big Red One could only be entrusted to Clarence Huebner, even though Huebner had not led the division during its prior wartime victories, and just ten months earlier was widely despised by the 1st Division's soldiers.

Few characteristics of a company or team have a greater impact on across-the-board results than culture. It is an enterprise's DNA, the collection of values and beliefs that define and govern its relationships and behaviors. The right culture propels sustained business growth and excellence. The wrong culture weakens or destroys an organization.

This case study explores how Huebner, following in the footsteps of a venerated leader, General Terry de la Mesa Allen, reshaped the division's cavalier culture into one befitting its elite reputation and illustrates the close tie between behavior and culture and how to extract elite performance from an organization.

While Huebner's tools were different, his tactics and process are applicable to molding elite culture in today's business organizations. He began with a clear vision of the culture he sought to create. From there Huebner:

1. **Built a leadership team that embraced the desired culture.**
2. **Communicated expectations and relentlessly followed up.**
3. **Led by example**

CASE STUDY TWO

Where to Put the Panzers SELECTING STRATEGY – PART 1

By late 1943, Germany's only potential hope to stop an Allied invasion and throw it back into the sea was its feared panzers. The question left for Hitler and his commanders was where to put the panzers. German-occupied western Europe included more than 2,500 miles (4,000 kilometers) of coastline to defend, and there simply were not enough panzer units to defend everywhere. Where to put the panzers to meet and defeat the expected Allied invasion was arguably the most important strategic question German military leaders faced.

To scale and sustain growth, at some point companies and their leaders must design and follow processes that are formalized: documented, communicated, measured, re-evaluated, and continuously improved over time.

No leader or team can accomplish everything all at once. All leaders must pursue important objectives with finite resources. The strategy that leaders select to employ and deploy those resources may make or break achieving the goal or mission.

This case study examines how German military leaders, facing an existential threat with severely constrained resources, failed to select and align around a viable strategy for positioning their tank forces to have any legitimate chance of defeating the invasion.

Today, corporate leaders possess a variety of methods to pursue their organization's strategic goals and plans. Most strategic planning approaches recognize and follow a similar methodology, usually including some variation of the following steps:

1. Clearly define and prioritize objectives and deadlines.
2. Engage all stakeholders.
3. Analyze the organization's current internal and external situation and environment, including its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis).
4. Identify and validate assumptions.
5. Make fact-based decisions.
6. Communicate the selected strategy and tactics across the organization.
7. Monitor performance and update goals and plans as needed.

While struggling to select their panzer strategy, the German military leaders either strayed from or skipped most of these steps.

CASE STUDY THREE

The Battle for the Bombers SELECTING STRATEGY – PART 2

For months prior to D-Day, both the Allies and the Germans fought internal battles to determine how to best

prepare for and win the impending clash. For the Allies, the most contentious pre-D-Day question was how to incorporate their thousands of large bombers already striking German industrial and urban targets from their English air bases. The question turned into a rancorous debate that raged for months between British and American leaders across both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

The Battle for the Bombers reveals how teams can devolve into parochialism and lose sight of primary objectives, and how great leaders can navigate disagreement and conflict to establish consensus around a shared vision and plan.

There are innumerable ways executives and managers can formally or informally arrange teams and work together to pursue important objectives. Leadership teamwork leverages individual talents and increases the likelihood of achieving shared objectives. Few individuals are equally skilled and effective in all leadership functions. Defining vision, setting strategy, planning for growth, building teams, molding culture, creating processes and systems, fostering accountability, and coaching development—these are common examples from the extensive and diverse demands put on today's leaders.

CASE STUDY FOUR

Ike's Call MAKING EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

It is illustrative that historian Carlo D'Este opens his 864-page biography *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life* with General Dwight D. Eisenhower's decision to launch the D-Day invasion. Eisenhower—"Ike"—spent the majority of his seventy-eight-year life serving his country: as an Army officer, where he eventually ascended to the rare rank of a five-star general; after the war as the first supreme Allied commander of NATO; and finally as the thirty-fourth president of the United States. During those decades of service, Ike made countless decisions of immense importance and impact. Yet, Eisenhower's momentous call setting D-Day in motion was the apex decision of his career, and a turning point in history. It also offers a fascinating study in effective decision-making

for today's business leaders. Successful leadership and management requires effective decision-making. Effectiveness does not mean accuracy; no leader gets every decision right. Instead, an effective decision-maker applies a reliable and repeatable process that isolates what is important, balances patience while gathering relevant information against the urgency of time, considers potential options, and then cleanly chooses the best course of action.

This case study explores the events leading up to Ike's decision to commence Operation Overlord.

The modern business leader may gain a valuable insight into effective decision-making methods by reviewing Ike's approach to this momentous decision, and the steps he took to improve his odds for making a successful call and thereby achieving victory.

Effective decision-making may be one of the least studied leadership skills. Decision-making tends to be idiosyncratic—individual experiences, perspectives, and intuition strongly influence the process and outcome. But developing decision-making skills and applying sound processes translates into superior business performance.

CASE STUDY FIVE

The Tanks That Sank Off Omaha APPLYING BUSINESS PROCESSES

Prior to Operation Overlord, amphibious assaults against an enemy beach had required the first groups of soldiers to wade ashore without protection from tanks, which could only be delivered once the beach was safe for ships to unload them. Allied military commanders and planners wished to change this and rewrite the invasion playbook on D-Day by putting hundreds of tanks on the beaches *prior* to the foot soldiers landing.

To achieve this change, the Allies invented and manufactured a secret weapon – a tank that could float and swim to the beaches under its own power, surprising the Germans and revolutionizing amphibious warfare.

Unfortunately, things did not go as planned for the top-secret swimming tanks. Choppy seas on D-Day morning seriously challenged the tanks' fragile technology. At Omaha Beach, senior US leaders failed to create and communicate a sound process for their subordinates to determine if the swimming tanks should deploy in the difficult seas. Consequently, one of the more senseless D-Day tragedies occurred, causing

lost lives in the waters off Omaha and contributing to the Americans' desperate struggle on the beach.

This case study examines the importance of creating and applying sound processes to help organizations maximize their likelihood of sustained success and minimize risk and the potential for failure.

All businesses are a collection of systems and processes and the people who establish and interact with them. In some situations, the systems and processes may be informal: unwritten, unmeasured, and not widely communicated or understood beyond one or a few people. However, to scale and sustain growth, at some point companies and their leaders must design and follow processes that are formalized: documented, communicated, measured, re-evaluated, and continuously improved over time.

CASE STUDY SIX

Hitler Snoozes

PURSUING CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

Pick up a handful of books about D-Day, and many mention that Adolf Hitler slept late on the morning of the Allied invasion. While the military consequences of Hitler snoozing may be debated by historians, for today's business leaders the events surrounding Hitler sleeping on D-Day morning present an opportunity to examine the importance of identifying and pursuing an organization's critical success factors (CSFs) that determine mission success or failure.

This case study tells the story of how the Germans lost focus on their critical success factors and delivered an unnecessarily confused and disorganized response at the start of the invasion, most vividly portrayed by Hitler remaining asleep long after his senior commanders knew an attack was underway.

For today's business executives, the Nazi lethargy on D-Day presents a powerful example of the need to identify and act on an organization's critical success factors.

All teams have goals or objectives, and thus all teams should identify those very few steps or activities that they must get right to be successful. CSFs will vary across companies, teams, industries, situations, and with time. Examples could include the following:

- Increase market share
- Maximize cross-selling of existing accounts

Teams and organizations that excel at anticipating and leveraging change differentiate themselves from competitors, stay ahead of market trends, attract and retain top talent, increase their value to customers, and achieve sustained profitable growth.

- Accelerate project completion rate
- Shorten launch time for new products or office locations
- Reduce costs of goods sold (COGS)
- Increase recurring revenue
- Minimize materials wastage
- Improve customer satisfaction or renewal rate

Avoid confusing CSFs with key performance indicators (KPIs). CSFs focus on the actions or steps that make the greatest contribution to success, while KPIs measure the pace and impact of those actions or steps. Convene stakeholders to discuss and identify CSFs to create a team aligned around its highest-impact activities. Once you define the CSF, identify and implement the managerial, operational, cultural, financial, and other steps your team must take to best achieve it.

CASE STUDY SEVEN

Those Damned Hedgerows

ADAPTING TO A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

In preparation for D-Day, Allied military leaders and strategists spent two years planning the invasion, keenly focused on how their forces would break through the heavily fortified defended beaches at Normandy. However, as Allied troops moved inland off the sands and into the Norman countryside, in some places the landscape changed into a terrain that shocked senior commanders and rank-and-file soldiers alike. Watching their carefully choreographed offensive slow to a crawl and casualties soar, Allied senior leaders realized they had no immediate answers for how to advance in this unexpectedly challenging environment.

This case study explores how Allied top military commanders neglected to prepare for a changing terrain after D-Day, and consequently how it was up to mid-level leaders to recognize the challenges and innovate solutions.

The Allied armies' experiences in the Norman countryside serve as an excellent proxy for the importance today's business leaders must place on embracing change and adaptation.

Adapting in a changing environment is essential for today's business executives, leaders, and managers. Business conditions and landscapes, internal and external, constantly change at a seemingly ever-increasing pace. Teams and organizations that remain static inevitably fall behind, decay, and disappear. Teams and organizations that excel at anticipating and leveraging change differentiate themselves from competitors, stay ahead of market trends, attract and retain top talent, increase their value to customers, and achieve sustained profitable growth.

Building organizations that embrace change is easier said than done. Change is messy. It causes individual and institutional discomfort and friction. To drive change, leaders must have a clear vision of the intended outcome, consistently lead and support the process, take personal risks, and nurture critical thinking and creativity. Looking back on the hedgerow case study, business leaders will find two examples of how the US Army in Normandy demonstrated a culture that valued adaptability during the hedgerow crisis: psychological safety and cross-functional collaboration.

CASE STUDY EIGHT

Failure at Falaise

DELEGATING AUTHORITY

By mid-August 1944, about ten weeks after D-Day, Allied armies managed to nearly encircle the bulk of Germany's remaining forces in Normandy, surrounding them in a "pocket" with the open end facing east near the French town of Falaise. Closing the pocket and entrapping the Germans would have produced the kind of total and decisive victory that most generals can only dream about. However, Allied leaders struggled to complete the encirclement before a nucleus of Germans escaped, leaving historians to debate if the primary headline for the events at Falaise should be that of a partial Allied victory or rather a regrettable missed opportunity.

This case study explores the importance of effective delegation of authority, without abdication of responsibility. Delegation is a critical leadership activity that requires skillfully balancing authority and responsibility between leaders and their team members.

Leaders who delegate too little weaken leverage and slow individual and organizational growth. Leaders who delegate too much cross over into abdication, undermining accountability and usually leading to inferior results.

To achieve the desired balance, when delegating objectives, leaders and managers must be effective at these eight steps:

1. Clearly communicate the objective(s) and priorities.
2. Share relevant contextual information.
3. Define any important deadlines, considerations, guidelines, or boundaries.
4. Ensure the team has the ability, resources, and decision-making autonomy to accomplish the objectives.
5. Maintain continuous communication and feedback.
6. Regularly monitor their team's progress.
7. Provide assistance if the team's efforts and/or progress is insufficient.
8. Reinsert themselves directly into the situation if the team is in danger of falling short of meeting the stated objectives.

CONCLUSION

Paying the Price of Victory

After paying the price for victory in Normandy, the Western Allies would add to their costs at many more battles to come, including Operation Market Garden, the Battle of the Bulge, the Hurtgen Forest, and the Ruhr Pocket. Meanwhile, in the east the Soviet Union's colossal struggle against the lion's share of German forces continued. As the combined western Allied and Soviet armies surrounded Germany and pushed toward Berlin, the price of victory rose at an accelerating pace.

During the final four months of the war, between the start of 1945 and Victory-Europe (VE) Day on May 8, an average of 650,000 soldiers died in combat each month, more than double the monthly rate during 1944. Appallingly, the number of civilian deaths and wounded followed the same catastrophic upward trajectory.

However, the Allied leadership and populations at home largely remained committed to paying the price and fighting till the bitter end. History too has largely agreed that the price needed to be paid.

The most effective leaders are lifelong learners. And successful leadership demands the ability to understand and positively influence human nature, beliefs, and behavior. For these reasons, history in general and warfare in particular offer compelling leadership laboratories for all leaders, including today's business owners, executives, and teams.

Some people shun the study of warfare for fear that examining it is the same as glorifying it. Just as we are not glorifying crime when we praise a police officer who rescues a civilian from a violent assault, we are not glorifying war when we acknowledge and honor those who, having found themselves thrust into the conflict, demonstrated courage, sacrifice, or wisdom. It is possible to condemn warfare and seek all possible means to avoid it, and simultaneously study events such as D-Day and Operation Overlord to gain lessons and insights that we can apply to better ourselves as persons, voters, leaders, and members of society.

Because war impacts practically every aspect of human experience and existence—family life, politics, demographics, economics, culture, etc.—war can produce lessons relevant to every human activity and endeavor. By extracting and incorporating those lessons into our personal lives and professional roles and responsibilities, we are applying and enjoying the freedom that was purchased for us by those who went before us.



Patrick Ungashick is an entrepreneur and advisor who has founded and led multiple companies in fields ranging from sales training and wealth management to private equity and exit strategy consulting. Author of *A Day for Leadership*, as well as *Dance in the End Zone* and *A Tale of Two Owners*, he is recognized for helping business owners maximize company value, plan successful exits, and navigate leadership succession. An award-winning speaker, he has delivered more than 500 workshops to business leaders and teams.

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