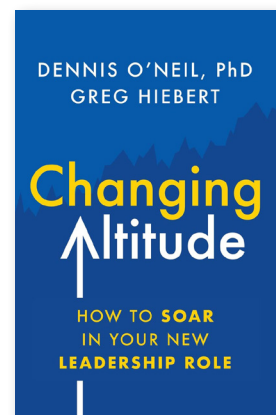


# Changing Altitude

How to Soar in Your New Leadership Role

by **Dennis O'Neil & Greg Hiebert**



## Contents

Introduction

Page 2

Part One: You

Page 2

Part Two: Your People

Page 3

Part Three: Your Environment

Page 3

Conclusion

Page 4

## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

When promoted, those filling new leadership positions are often caught off guard. There are a lot of new responsibilities that come with this type of role, and the best way to navigate them is by using a solid strategy – but what if you don't have one?

Holding a leadership role requires an individual to have agility when navigating a range of changing altitudes, like ability and insight. In *Changing Altitude: How to Soar in Your New Leadership Role* by Dennis O'Neil & Greg Hiebert, those entering these positions can learn strategies that focus on three important key elements – yourself, your people, and your environment. Both O'Neil and Hiebert dive deep into these key elements, teaching how to achieve deeper growth, understanding, and success in each of these areas.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Strategies to build the leadership framework that will help you soar and navigate through the different altitudes of your newfound responsibility.
- The way that leadership characteristics can influence your journey, how accepting feedback can help you improve, and what your optimal altitude is so that you are performing at your best.
- How your people often share the same collective value that you do, and how to use positive communication techniques within your strategies.
- The best way to get to know your new environment and why leading paradoxically is especially important, even in crisis management situations.

## Introduction

Sometimes all it takes is a conversation to give you a different perspective on a subject. The concept of changing altitudes in leadership began while sitting on the last plane out of Miami. Talking to a fellow passenger named Rebecca, who was reading Jim Collins' bestseller, *Good to Great*, it is found that she had recently been promoted to a director position at a data analytics firm. In her previous role (manager), she felt confident, knew what she was doing, and the employees under her trusted her. However, in her new role, she described the feeling: "My head is swirling with everything I'm responsible for. Honestly, I've begun to significantly doubt my ability to do this job. I miss my old life when I was just a manager."

As a leader, you are responsible for yourself, your people, and your environment – and it is all a process that you learn to navigate when changing altitude. Like many other industry promotions, the change in altitude can be hard to navigate without context and guidance. When it comes to changing your attitude, use this mindset: you have to weather the storm, get out of the clouds, and gain a deeper understanding of growth and success in all that you do.

## Part One: You

### Know Thyself

The first step of creating a legacy of effective leadership – "know thyself." Self-awareness is a key factor in establishing great leadership characteristics within ourselves. By being self-aware, we are more objective and become more effective. Those with the highest levels of self-awareness are more capable of being creative and adapting to whatever gets thrown at them. As we gain confidence in ourselves, we are more likely to motivate and empower others – which is critical when flying at a higher management level.

### The Seven Critical Characteristics of Leadership

If you want to get honest about yourself as a leader, you have to examine yourself to see if you are exhibiting the characteristics of a leader. You can assess yourself at any time during your journey, but at some point, you have to take a long hard look at yourself about your strengths and weaknesses. That is what the seven critical characteristics of leadership are – do you have them, or do you need to work to gain them?

1. Inspiring Engagement

2. Advocating for Experience
3. Planning and Implementing
4. Driving for Results
5. Leading Change and Innovation
6. Influencing Others
7. Practicing Teamwork and Collaboration

When you put all of these characteristics together, you get the ideal leader. You have to go through each of these and assign "strength" or "weakness" – only then will you know exactly which ones you need to work on to become a better leader.

### The Importance of Feedback

One of the best ways to increase self-awareness is feedback. There are a few different ways to gain feedback, including the 360-Assessment tool. This assessment tool can help spotlight the areas for growth and give you a deeper understanding of the areas where you consistently excel. You can consider having anyone who works on projects with you complete an after-action report to let you know how you are doing or work with a specialized manager/coach who can guide you in the most efficient leadership ways.

### Flying at Optimal Altitude

Changing altitude can result in downward and upward spirals. That is why self-care is of the utmost importance anytime you are changing altitudes. In fact, the recommendation is spreading about 60 minutes of self-care throughout your day. Try referencing *The Powers of Full Engagement* by Tony Schwartz and Jim Loehr, which offers four crucial areas for optimal performance.

These include:

1. Physical Wellbeing
2. Mental Wellbeing
3. Emotional Wellbeing
4. Spiritual Wellbeing

When these are addressed, you find yourself feeling more aligned, focused, connected, and energized. We believe that self-care strategies are important and share how it helps to remain level at any altitude.

### Part Two: Your People

#### Form and Live Collective Values

Here we have the story of Jaclyn and Hussein – a Director of Marketing who befriended a single father, offered him a job, and the relationship turned into a romantic one. Hussein was soon the center of favoritism, which damaged the entire working relationship between Jaclyn and her team. The team soon lost respect for her and did not trust her as their leader.

The restoration process begins by implementing a team covenant – everyone would know what was expected from one another. This included Jaclyn. This “contract” brought about a “reset” for the team, as well as Jaclyn. Using the covenant you build with your team, you can change the entire dynamic. Even though leadership and team respect take work, Jaclyn worked hard and had restored a lot of her teams’ confidence by the six-month mark. Having and forming collective values with your subordinates shows them how much they matter and that you are willing to earn their respect as a leader – even if you have some leadership skills to work on.

#### Communication

Communication goes beyond what you say; it also incorporates how you think. You might think you communicate something to an employee clearly, but their actions show that they got the wrong idea about what you were talking about. This miscommunication can happen because you were not incorporating how you think into your communication with that employee.

Your thinking forms how you interpret another person. You bring this interpretation to the conversation – which can shift how the conversation is interpreted by your employee. Do they get the vibe that you are interested in or that you find them incompetent? The way you listen only drives this point home. Are you actively listening to what they have to say, or does it look as if you would rather be anywhere else but there? You are setting the tone for the connections you make with your employees – this includes the body language you are putting out there. You want your employees to feel like it is safe to communicate with you as a boss.

#### Leading Change and Exerting Influence

Being a leader is more than just wielding the “leader” title. Leadership influences the behavior of those around you so that goals are accomplished and positive outcomes are realized. Effective leaders get people to go with them, not against them, when trying to achieve positive outcomes

in the workplace. When projects get more complicated, it requires the use of different skills – skills that may not have been utilized in the past. As the leader, you need to be the one to drive this change and show (using influence) that these are for the better and not for the worse.

#### Empowering Others

True leadership requires you to utilize the strengths of others around you. The example that is used here is Shannon. Shannon was an exceptional worker, great in everything she did. When promoted, she still continued doing everyone else’s jobs – rarely delegating tasks. On the rare occasion she would delegate tasks, she ridiculed her employees, letting them know that they did not do it the way she would have done it. As a result of her actions, her employees felt reigned in, distrusted, and devalued.

To be an effective leader, Shannon has to take a long look in the mirror – she isn’t empowering those around her; instead, she is stripping them of their confidence. Effective leaders know how to empower those around them. While complicated to do, the consequences of not delegating and empowering employees to fulfill their roles can be devastating to the leader’s mental, physical, and emotional health.

### Part Three: Your Environment

#### Understanding The Environment

There is constant change in the world around us – but the recent influx of technological advances has sped up this process. Throw in a crisis with all this change occurring, and you are bound to end up feeling like you are flat on your face. Agility is the key for an effective leader to navigate the environment they are in. They read the cues brought to them by their environment and adapt to it, creating solutions that allow them to navigate the altitude they are soaring safely. Leaders must always anticipate the future if they want to stay ahead – effective leadership is about changing the present to correspond with what the future will throw at you. We’ve identified five steps to help our clients analyze their environment and identify their clear next steps:

1. What is going on in the environment?
2. What do we want the end state to look like?
3. Where do we act?
4. How do we act to achieve our desired state?
5. What are the resources we require?

When using these as a foundation to address change in your environment, effective leaders can form a strategy that works for everyone involved.

### Conflict Management

Put simply – conflicts happen. Even as an effective leader, there is very little you can do to stop conflict from occurring. Conflicts don't always have to be fighting or strong disagreement; in fact, many times, it is only a difference of opinion or perspective. In most circumstances, when conflicts turn out badly, it is because the situation was handled poorly, to begin with. An effective leader doesn't pick a side, but rather listens to both sides of the conflict – essentially gaining an understanding of the problem.

### Paradoxical Leadership

Here you find ten leadership paradoxes. A paradox is defined as the co-existence of two things that should not be able to co-exist logically. These are the ten we want to bring your attention as a leader:

1. The Stockdale Paradox – maintaining unwavering faith that you can (and will) prevail in the end regardless of the difficulties you face
2. Quinn's Competing Values Framework – Do things fast and do them right.
3. Collins' Level Five Leadership – Balance professional hunger with humility.
4. Be flexible and rigid.
5. Be soft and hard.
6. Hold on to your vision, but know when to change your mind.
7. Be engaging and reserved.
8. Be humble and confident.
9. Be decisive and discerning.
10. Be accommodating and directing.

The idea is that paradoxical leadership is not easy, nor should it be. Leaders who find the entire process easy are likely not doing it right.

### Conclusion

We've sought to provide you with the essential tools you need to successfully change altitude. Every situation, every individual, and every organization is different. Without a framework and process to reference, leaders can find themselves flying blind. We hope that the tools and principles we have shared provide you with the means to be a more effective, profound, and capable leader. We hope these evidence-based strategies give you a richness to draw from and will serve as powerful upward drafts. Ultimately, we hope they will lead you to soar.



**Dennis O'Neil** has decades of applied leadership and teaching experience as an executive coach with leadershipForward, a professor of strategic leadership, and a trusted advisor to CEOs, public and non-profit boards, senior government and military officials, and multinational organizations.



**Greg Hiebert** is the co-founder of leadershipForward and bestselling author of *You Can't Give What You Don't Have*. He's served as a leader and mentor for organizations like the United States Military Academy, the United States Army, McKinsey & Company, and the Yale School of Management.

*Changing Altitude: How to Soar in Your New Leadership Role* by Dennis O'Neil & Greg Hiebert. © 2021 by Dennis O'Neil & Greg Hiebert. Summarized by permission of the publisher, Lioncrest Publishing. 324 pages, ISBN 978-1544525648. Summary copyright © 2022 by Soundview Book Summaries ®