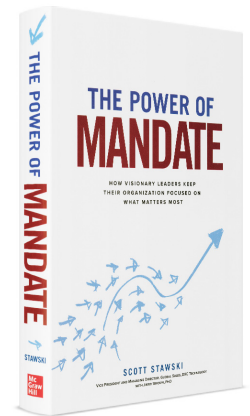


The Power of Mandate

How Visionary Leaders Keep Their Organization Focused on What Matters Most

by **Scott Stawski with Jimmy Brown, Ph.D.**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Most organizations today are driven by a “soft” approach to leadership, using democratic methods such as consensus, negotiation, and compromise. The problem is, it doesn’t work. In *The Power of Mandate*, authors Scott Stawski and Jimmy Brown, Ph.D. show that the most radically successful companies are the ones that defy groupthink and break the mold, whose leaders epitomize mandate driven leadership to create or redefine entire industries.

The book explains the basic principles and philosophy of mandate driven leadership, including creative disruption and sheer willpower, to implement a vision and strategy. Compelling examples of legendary leaders also show mandate driven leadership in action—how strong leaders turn a vision into reality. This is how leaders like you can learn from the greatest minds of our time, to forge your own unique path to the future.

The Power of Mandate will shatter your preconceptions about innovation and alter the way you think about leading. It’s a must-read for all leaders in the age of disruption.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The key theme for developing effective leaders.
- The many downsides of consensus leadership.
- The three essential characteristics of Mandate Driven Leaders.
- To create a Mandate Driven Culture.

Introducing the Mandate Driven Leader

Most consultants and business schools teach consensus building and management as the core foundation of leadership. In fact, in many companies, the concept of achieving consensus has achieved a sacrosanct status. But truth be told, consensus-driven leadership is a root cause of many a failed business.

Consensus can be defined a number of different ways. MBA texts include terms like “a decision reached by a group, not through the mandate of an individual, but through agreement of all the participants.” In other words, it means the decision was reached by the overall opinion of the group.

While consensus-based decision making is very popular and does tend to make people feel good, it is not necessarily the best approach. And it is rarely the right approach for C-level executives—especially during a time when technology is driving real business disruption.

Today much of our economy, the digital economy, is now driven by technology. This technological innovation is resulting in real, long-lasting business disruption. New markets and channels are being created, entire business paradigms rethought, supply and demand channels upended. Nothing is sacrosanct.

So how do we have all these amazing technological innovations that power our world and allow us to do things that only a few years ago were the stuff of science fiction? Simply put, these disruptive companies are propelled forward by Mandate Driven Leadership. These leaders are not consensus driven, and they really don't care who agrees with them when it concerns achieving their vision.

Three Themes for Effective Leaders. . . and One Missing One

The leading literature suggests that leadership traits and characteristics can be grouped into three common themes of what it takes to be an effective leader.

The first theme is that leaders expect the best from themselves and from others. If leaders want to succeed, they need everyone doing things right.

Regardless of what a leader's motive is, leaders stay motivated and motivate others. This is the second common theme. Good leaders know how to get a team to do more than they think they can do.

Leaders are also not shy about letting the world know

about their accomplishments. The great ones are even less shy about letting the world know about their team's accomplishments, which is the third theme. Mandate Driven Leaders understand that recognition drives outcomes and helps teams drive toward the vision set by the leader.

Missing from the literature is the realization that no company today can afford to be led within a status quo environment. Today we need leaders who can push organizations in directions they may not want to go, in part because they don't realize they need to. These leaders have a vision, and they command the organization to take a certain course of action to achieve that vision.

These visionary leaders have a belief, idea, strategy, or tactic that is so compelling that they do not accept “no” for an answer. Through mandate, they drive the vision from concept to implementation.

Steve Jobs, Prototype of a Mandate Driven Leader

Steve Jobs will go down in history as one of the most challenging leaders to work with of all time. Shortly after his death, *The Atlantic's* Tom McNichol referred to Steve Jobs as “a world-class asshole.” Biographer Walter Isaacson repeatedly talks about how there was Good Steve and there was Bad Steve. While Good Steve could inspire those around him to achieve groundbreaking innovations that the world didn't realize it needed, Bad Steve could just as easily tear people down and make them hate life and run them off.

Steve Jobs is the prototype of a Mandate Driven Leader, which begs the question: Could he have accomplished the same adopting a different leadership model? While there are some management gurus who will undoubtedly disagree, the answer is an absolute no.

Jobs's adoption of a Mandate Driven Leadership model was integral to his success. As he matured, it became very deliberate as Jobs recognized that Mandate Driven Leadership was essential to being “crazy enough to think they can change the world.”

Susan Kalla, an investment manager, wrote in *Forbes*, “his high aspirations spilled over onto Apple employees who believed they too could accomplish anything.” The same traits that made Steve Jobs a “world-class asshole” were the traits that enabled him to achieve great things. The same passion that made him lose his temper was the obsession that drove him to relentlessly drive forward his vision. The same lack of self-awareness that made him think the rules didn't apply to him was what allowed him to find ways to fill needs we

In order to show consensus, groups may drive all the members away from the basic or original thought toward one that is acceptable to all.

didn't know we had. Those same traits that made him a tyrant to work for also made him a Mandate Driven Leader. Steve Jobs was crazy enough that he did change the world.

The History and Pitfalls of Consensus Leadership

Consensus decision making and the principles that comprise consensus management can be traced back centuries. Five Native American societies, the Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, and Seneca, established the Haudenosaunee Confederation. This confederation, which is still active today, is based on the principles of consensus. In Europe, many governing bodies and associations, like the town councils and the guilds, have operated on consensus management principles for hundreds of years.

In more recent times, social and political activists find the principles of consensus management essential to their work. According to the organization Seeds for Change, many current social and political movements believe that the methods for achieving change must match their vision and goals of a free, nonviolent, egalitarian society.

Consensus management principles first made their way into the business world via the cooperative movement. The cooperative movement began in England and France in the nineteenth century. The industrial revolution was transforming society. The increasing mechanization of the workplace was threatening the livelihood of large portions of the worker base.

This gave rise to many labor and social movements, including the cooperative movement. The cooperative movement allowed workers to unite around a common economic goal, with leadership as well as the economic output of the cooperative being equally shared.

The idea of consensus building became popular with the trend to involve or engage all stakeholders in the decision-making process, which in turn evolved with the acknowledgment that people who gave their voluntary consent were more likely to stand by the decision and be ac-

countable as well as take responsibility in the implementation process. Thus, by the mid to late 20th century, consensus decision making was norm de rigueur within business schools and corporate management.

The Downside of Consensus

While consensus management may contribute to the positive feelings of the whole, it is also counterproductive and detrimental to the decision-making process if misapplied, which it often is. Consensus is often misconstrued to mean or portray unanimity in the context of decision making.

The fallacious interpretation of consensus as unanimity is forced upon other members who may have valid questions or doubts but can be cowed into consent by the group's desire to reach a unanimous and strong decision. Group members may resolve not to follow any action unless consensus is manifested in unanimous agreement and unless each and every member of the group has acquiesced.

Another pitfall exists when there are dissenters but they are ignored to ensure that a unanimous agreement is projected, and thus the opinion of the minority is not even heard or discussed.

In reality, many of today's organizations reward likeability. The trait might be encased in the terms collaboration, consensus building, and team-oriented, but at the end of the day many organizations reward individuals whose thought processes and actions are not at odds with the mainstream.

Also, in order to show consensus, groups may drive all the members away from the basic or the original thought toward one that is acceptable to all. This leads to the dilution of ideas, which may have had their own merit and utility if they had been pursued but were, instead, discarded or toned down to appease the majority and build a consensus in decision making.

Hewlett Packard is a classic example of where dramatic industry changes coupled with a culture of consensus can lead to disastrous results. Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard established a set of business principles—encapsulated in the “HP Way.” These principles helped establish a heritage of

consensus management within the company that has often been cited as the ideal state. In the early years, Hewlett Packard's engineering acumen allowed the company to grow and thrive.

However, the well-entrenched consensus management culture proved to be disastrous for the company during times of digital disruption. The lack of the directive leadership necessary during these times resulted in a string of failed strategies and acquisitions, including Compaq, EDS, and Autonomy. What was at one time the largest technology company in the world was ultimately dismantled.

In the end, consensus leadership is an approach to management where the process is deemed more important than the outcome—where it is deemed more important to involve and engage everyone and to create an atmosphere of participation and agreement, rather than a vision of change.

Mandate Driven Leadership Defined

How is a Mandate Driven Leader defined, and more important, how can each of us develop into this type of leader? How does the Mandate Driven Leadership model differ from the transformational, transactional, servant, authentic, or any other leadership approaches that pop up from blogs to academic peer-reviewed journal articles?

Successful Mandate Driven Leaders have a vision, drive to an outcome, and are unrelenting until it is accomplished.

A well-communicated vision of the future. Mandate Driven Leaders see a future that is better than the status quo. At the core, the Mandate Driven Leader recognizes that survival starts with a vision for a better future. The vision of the future for a leader might be a new product. It might be a better business process. It might be a completely new business paradigm for an industry.

Jeff Bezos, in a presentation in 1999 when Amazon was four years young, was asked about the vision for Amazon. He stated, "It's customers helping customers make purchasing decisions. And that's what is community . . . businesses cannot create community. All businesses can do is facilitate community." Bezos's vision was not to create the largest online bookseller or retailer. He was creating a community marketplace powered entirely by the community members themselves—their reviews, their rankings, their search results, and in many ways their product mix and their prices. Bezos still ingrains that vision into everything Amazon does.

Drive to the outcome instead of the process. Once the vision of the end state is established, a Mandate Driven Leader drives to the outcome. Death by process is actively avoided. A Mandate Driven Leader assumes that the required outcomes of the team, the organization, and sometimes society take priority over getting everyone in the team to agree on the strategy at hand.

Mandate Driven Leaders are OK with individuals questioning and debating the many details that are required to implement the vision to reality. In fact, they demand it. However, this is different from questioning or obstructing the vision.

Jack Welch, another consummate Mandate Driven Leader, was the CEO of General Electric from 1981 to 2001. He quickly developed the nickname "Neutron Jack." This nickname was earned through various strategies he implemented, including exiting any business where GE could not be the market share leader and firing the bottom 10 percent of all employees each and every review period.

In a short period of time, Welch terminated more than 100,000 employees and exited businesses with revenue in the billions. The result was that he turned what at the time was a company in crisis into a global power and increased the company's market value by more than \$300 billion while achieving record revenue and profits.

Unrelenting focus and determination to achieve the end state. Mandate Driven Leaders do not take "no" for an answer. They do not accept excuses. They hold individuals accountable. And they do not stop driving relentlessly forward until the end state is achieved. It is not unusual for some people to confuse Mandate Driven Leaders and their unrelenting focus and determination with leaders who are narcissistic, poor team builders, and just plain mean-spirited.

But business leaders who are tyrants and dictators are not directive leaders for the common good; they are in it for their own selfish gain. Such leaders may claim they are champions of the people, and some even start out that way, but they quickly devolve into enriching themselves. One of the clearest examples of this comes from the Enron scandal. Ken Lay and Jeff Skilling were reportedly very difficult and demanding, but their mandate had nothing to do with helping anyone other than themselves. And they ended up being prosecuted for it.

Mandate Driven Leaders, on the other hand, add value to those around them and the world in general. This makes

people want to be around them and work with them, regardless of whether they are easy to work with or challenging.

Aside from the three main themes, Mandate Driven Leaders are different from other leaders in that they are surprised when others don't see the value in their vision, and are ruthless about getting there; they won't accept failure in themselves or others; they assume they are in charge; put customers/stakeholders first and employees second; and won't allow others to be selfish.

This focus on what needs to be done without getting bogged down in what the critics say makes Bill Gates a Mandate Driven Leader.

Effective Leadership Styles and the Mandate Driven Leader

When we think about Mandate Driven Leadership, how does it fit with a servant and transformational leadership approach used by someone like Dr. Martin Luther King? How might it be integrated into a directive leader like Jack Welch?

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, was clearly a Mandate Driven Leader. Microsoft at its birth was singularly focused on transforming how society can use technology, specifically the desktop PC, to transform and better the world. This was not only Bill Gates's vision but also his mandate. And during these early days, Gates was unrelenting in driving this vision forward. As time has gone on and he has been able to let Microsoft run without him, Gates has transferred this Mandate Driven Leadership approach to his charitable work.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is by far the largest philanthropic organization in the world, with an endowment exceeding \$45 billion. The focus is on "improving people's health and wellbeing, helping individuals lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty." It is their belief that education coupled with technology enablers plays a critical part in this objective. The Foundation now spends more each year

on health issues than most individual countries of the world.

However, some academics have questioned the spending priorities of the foundation. Researchers from Oxford published an article in 2008 questioning whether the foundation was prioritizing spending on infectious diseases affecting highly developed countries over the chronic health problems of the poor.

While the critics have their say, as he did at Microsoft Gates continues to propel his vision for the foundation forward without being distracted by the naysayers. This focus on what needs to be done without getting bogged down in what the critics say makes Bill Gates a Mandate Driven Leader.

However, is Gates also a servant leader? Or is Gates a directive leader or an authoritarian leader? What about a transformational leader? Or does his habit of poring through lines of code even at the CEO level during his Microsoft days make him more of a transactional leader?

This leads to the question of whether you can be a Mandate Driven Leader within many of the accepted leadership styles. Mandate Driven Leadership enables and enhances most leadership styles and helps us avoid autocracy because it keeps the leader focused on the vision.

Servant leadership. Popularized by Robert Greenleaf, servant leadership grew out of his Christian worldview, to see the leader as someone who serves rather than just someone who directs. It views leaders' role as taking care of others rather than just enhancing themselves. This focus on others has created a common misconception that servant leaders are only focused on the needs of the people who work for them. While servant leaders do consider their followers' needs and wants carefully, that consideration is in the context of the organization serving a greater good for society as a whole.

Let's say someone sees herself as a servant leader and sees an opportunity for developing some new and improved widget that will help feed underprivileged people. Taking the organization in that direction, however, would make things more challenging for the people in the organization, at least in the short term. Someone with only a surface-level understanding of servant leadership might assume that a servant leader would forgo that direction because she is taking care of the people in the organization first.

A true servant leader, however, would make the hard choice to go toward the greater good, despite the complaints from

the employees, because she knows that is the best thing to do in the long run. You don't get much more mandate driven than that.

Authentic leadership. This is a relatively nascent concept that is centered around honest relationships and leading from an ethical foundation. While particular definitions may vary, the most common conceptualizations center around four key constructs:

- Self-awareness;
- Relational transparency;
- Balanced processing;
- Internalized moral perspective.

These constructs actually work well for Mandate Driven Leaders because when a leader is focused on doing what is right rather than what is popular, there is no reason to be anything but authentic. There is no time wasted trying to drag along the contrarians because you have a job to do. If the mandate is authentic, then the leader will be, too.

Authoritarian leadership. While this style has become much less popular in the modern discourse, it is still an important consideration for several reasons. Even though many sophisticated leaders preach that this style is outdated and obsolete, quite a few of them will revert back to it when things get tough. There are some industries and cultures where having a more authoritarian style is not only accepted but necessary.

When some people hear the term Mandate Driven Leadership, they will assume it is just a repackaging of the authoritarian style for leaders who lack empathy and are totally self-absorbed. Many of the most truly authoritarian leaders lack a clear vision and default to this style out of fear or self-interest. Mandate Driven Leaders always have a clear vision of where they want the company to go, and they are open and honest (authentic) about what those goals are.

Another defining characteristic typically associated with authoritarian leaders is lack of input from subordinates and team members. What little input they do allow comes from the "yes" crowd; they don't ever actively seek opposing views but enjoy their echo chambers.

Mandate Driven Leaders look for different views and listen to them. Once they make a decision, however, they do not let the naysayers second-guess the direction, and they keep the organization laser-focused on its goals. Even when the goal is

some crazy idea like streaming movies over the internet.

What makes Mandate Driven Leadership unique is that it is not just another leadership style or theory. It is a new way of understanding how successful leaders decide what agendas to pursue and then how to take the agenda to reality. It is about understanding how and why leaders push their organizations to reach new heights. In truth, Mandate Driven Leaders can use almost any style of leadership, as long as they are driving toward the necessary vision.

Creating a Mandate Driven Culture

There is a saying that "culture eats strategy for breakfast." Leaders can put forth or even mandate a phenomenal vision, but a vision alone is not going to make a turtle run faster.

Leaders must truly understand all aspects of the existing culture to determine what parts of the culture are supportive of the vision and where the culture could kill the vision. Mandate Driven Leaders must look at the culture within their organization relative to things like innovation, outcome versus process, roadblocks, and tenacity.

HP had a culture rooted in engineering and process and consensus as opposed to a culture rooted in agile decision making and financial performance. When HP entered the software and technology services business where fast innovation, agility of decision making, and financial performance are key, the result was deteriorating market share, failed acquisitions, and poor financial performance. Culture ate strategy.

The *Field of Dreams* Fallacy

So why does this matter to a Mandate Driven Leader? Mandate Driven Leaders understand that they want to avoid the *Field of Dreams* fallacy. This is the erroneous belief that "if you build it, they will come." Mandate Driven Leaders understand that you can't just throw an idea out there and expect people to embrace it. No leader disrupts the market alone, and you have to create a compelling vision for people to follow and create an environment that enables them to do that.

And given that Mandate Driven Leaders do not micromanage processes, they have to create a culture where everyone accepts the mission and socially motivates others to do the same. All members of the organization must realize that they only have two choices: get in the boat and row or get out and swim to a different shore. The question, of course, is how do you create such a culture? How do you drive everyone to buy into these efforts?

Mandate Driven Leaders understand and accept that at least some of the people in that organization are not going to like change and may need to leave.

Mandate Driven Leaders understand and accept that at least some of the people in that organization are not going to like change and may need to leave.

Obviously, this is very different from the consensus-driven approaches often promoted that say something like, “Ask the team what they think,” “Get everyone on board,” and so on. Mandate Driven Leaders know they are working against time, and while no culture changes overnight, you must change behavior if you are going to change the culture. And if you want to change behavior, start by changing management systems inclusive of processes, metrics, and accountability. It is this ability to force culture change that is critical to a transformative Mandate Driven Leader.

One of the most important things Mandate Driven Leaders do is to develop a culture that opposes and prevents groupthink. Some people confuse this with group cohesion, but in fact, it is very different. The difference is that in groupthink, maintaining group cohesion becomes more important than making good decisions. The fact that the term originally came from George Orwell’s novel *1984* should be a pretty good indication that it is something to be avoided.

So what kind of culture should Mandate Driven Leaders create? It depends on what kind of culture they want to create. The culture at Facebook is very different from the culture at Netflix or Amazon. It is also a pretty good bet that the culture at Apple is nothing like the culture at Airbnb. All of these cultures are aligned to the strategy that the organization wants to execute and the vision the leader is mandating to fruition. It may be a culture of sheer innovation or a culture of agility or a culture of competitiveness.

And if there is one thing that all Mandate Driven Leaders know, either you manage the culture or the culture manages you.

Brian Chesky, CEO of Airbnb

The President’s Room inside the Airbnb headquarters of the online home-sharing platform has a model ship that sits on a coffee table, a 19th-century sailing yacht. The model is the key to the President’s Room, and may be the backbone

of the Chesky operation, for the sailing vessel works as a metaphor for Chesky’s leadership style.

“If you think about it, Airbnb is like a giant ship,” Chesky told *Fortune* magazine. “And as CEO I’m the captain of the ship. But I really have two jobs: The first job is that I have to worry about everything below the water line, anything that can sink the ship. Beyond that, I have to focus on two to three areas that I’m deeply passionate about—that aren’t below the water line but that I focus on because I can add unique value, I’m truly passionate about them, and they can truly transform the company if they go well.”

For Chesky, those three focus areas that are above the water line are the product, brand, and culture, which are the crucial components beyond the technical aspects of an internet operation. It is in these three areas that Chesky shows his Mandate Driven Leadership style.

Chesky understands that his role as captain of that ship is to establish the destination, chart the course, and propel the ship to that destination. Captains do not sail a ship by consensus. As the captain, Chesky understands that propelling an organization to achieve a vision requires directive stewardship.

Mandate Driven Leadership and the Digital Economy

Powered by digital technology and the digital economy, disruption is everywhere. Every industry. Every geography. Affecting every business. The former VP of marketing at Dell, Heather Simmons, once said, “Knowing that an asteroid is going to hit the earth is not really useful if you are not planning to launch missiles to knock it out of the sky. You have to work massively overtime on the belief that innovation or massive change is going to happen.”

This thought is critical for leaders today because business disruption is going to continue. Uber is less than 10 years old and disrupted the livery business arguably in less than five years from its founding. Airbnb is now the largest

hospitality company in the world and does not own a single hotel. Instacart hit \$1 billion in valuation in 795 days. And Facebook took a mere 396 days to be valued at \$1 billion and now has a valuation of \$513 billion.

A startup today has access to world-class technology enablers that only a few years ago were available only to the largest of US businesses. Cloud-based computing and software as a service now allow entrepreneurs and established businesses to use technology on a consumption basis without the large up-front hardware or licensing fees. This allows a startup to compete against any established business anywhere in the world if its leaders have the right vision. Technology and infrastructure are no longer a barrier to change but an accelerator to change.

These disrupters are a threat to every legacy business. And who do you think is leading that next wave of startups—someone who espouses consensus management as the leadership style needed for quick market entry and disruption? Or a Mandate Driven Leader who has a vision for the startup, communicates that vision clearly, and is unrelenting until the vision is achieved?

Elon Musk, Mandate Driven Leader

Elon Musk, the co-founder and CEO of Tesla, has had his share of negative press. And he would be categorized as a Mandate Driven Leader. Musk has told many an audience that friends, family, and business associates attempted to talk him out of both Tesla and SpaceX. He has told *USA Today* that starting SpaceX and Tesla was probably “the dumbest things to do” as far as a startup.

However, Musk has started a revolution in the car industry, proving every naysayer incorrect. Electric car sales are grow-

ing at 50+ percent a year and will increase from 3 million units in 2017 to more than 125 million units by 2030. Every automobile manufacturer is now scrambling to catch up. In typical Mandate Driven Leadership fashion, when Elon Musk was asked why he started Tesla and SpaceX if it truly was the “dumbest thing to do,” he said, he “believed in the companies’ abilities to change the world for the better.”

The disruption of yesterday and even today is only the beginning. We are on the cusp of an even greater round of disruption. Faster than many companies think, we will see monumental shifts in the value and supply chains in healthcare, manufacturing, insurance, finance, and consumer packaged goods.

For legacy companies not just to survive but to thrive in this era of digital disruption, they need transformational leaders who have a vision for the future of the company to allow it, through directive leadership, to become the disrupter instead of the disrupted.

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- *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone To Take Action* by Simon Sinek
- *Anticipate: The Art of Leading by Looking Ahead* by Rob-Jan de Jong



Scott Stawski is the Global Chief Revenue Officer for Applications and Business Process Services at DXC Technology. A trusted advisor for CEOs, CFOs, and CIOs in the Americas, Scott is a recognized expert in digital, analytics, and data management, technology strategy, outsourcing, and next-generation application transformation to the cloud. Jimmy Brown, Ph.D., is a senior consulting executive with more than 20 years’ experience delivering practical strategies for business performance improvement. His current efforts focus on leadership development, strategic planning, and change management.

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