



Making Yourself Indispensable

The Power of Personal Accountability

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

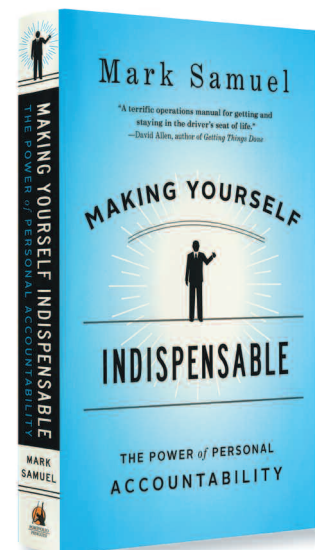
Imagine waking up with enthusiasm every workday. Imagine being certain that you are highly valued by your boss and co-workers. Imagine feeling secure and in control because, even if jobs are being eliminated, you're too valuable to let go. In other words, imagine being indispensable.

Sound too good to be true? Not according to Mark Samuel, who has helped thousands of people around the world get on the path to personal achievement and fulfillment. He shows why the key to becoming indispensable is to embrace accountability rather than run from it in everything you do at work and in your personal life.

Becoming indispensable doesn't require a fancy degree, a senior management title or huge income. It's a mind-set available to anyone. You'll also discover Samuel's proven strategies for letting go of victimhood, figuring out what's really holding you back and taking smart actions to achieve your highest goals.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to exhibit the 10 behaviors of indispensability.
- Six choices that can have a direct impact on your results in life.
- A step-by-step process for overcoming challenges and obstacles.
- A road map to make yourself indispensable to everyone in your life.
- Insights and tools for achieving success and satisfaction at work and at home.



by Mark Samuel

CONTENTS

Committing to Make Yourself Indispensable

Page 2

The Road Map

Page 3

Intention: Take Charge of Your Life

Page 4

Recognize Your Current Reality

Page 5

Gaining Strength Through Forgiveness

Page 6

Take Action to Be Successful

Page 7

The Missing Step: Celebrating Success

Page 8

THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: MAKING YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

by Mark Samuel

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Introduction

Making yourself indispensable is dedicating yourself to being “counted on” by others and yourself. Seth Godin makes this point in his book *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* when he says, “The only way to get what you’re worth is to stand out, to exert emotional labor, to be seen as indispensable, and to produce interactions that organizations and people care deeply about.” Just as Oprah Winfrey could be counted on by her audience and Nelson Mandela was accountable to the people of South Africa, you must be counted on by your customers, your manager, your teammates at work and your family at home. Ultimately, to develop confidence, happiness and a sense of fulfillment in your life, you must be able to “count on” yourself to honor your commitments that support your growth, your goals and your play. Thus the core competency necessary to making yourself indispensable is “accountability” — the ability to count on yourself and be counted on by others. Accountability is not determined by an event from your past. Accountability is an ongoing process based on the choices you make each and every moment. Living an accountable life leads to greater happiness, greater learning and making a meaningful difference to others. ●

Committing to Make Yourself Indispensable

Making yourself indispensable is not about position, power or ego. It is about taking charge, overcoming obstacles and achieving your dreams at work, at home and in your life.

Ten Behaviors of Indispensability

Based on hundreds of role models I have witnessed during my 25 years in business, I have identified 10 behaviors necessary for reaching the status of indispensability. For each behavior, take a moment and assess yourself on the 1-to-10 scale (where 10 is high and 1 is low). Add up the numbers to get your Indispensability Score.

Behavior #1: Be in service to others without expecting anything in return.

Behavior #2: Be dedicated to the highest standards of performance, teamwork and communication.

Behavior #3: Be open and adaptable.

Behavior #4: Keep commitments and agreements.

Behavior #5: Expand your role to support your organization, community or family.

Behavior #6: Be a valued resource to others.

Behavior #7: Be dedicated to self-improvement and professional development.

Behavior #8: Use obstacles and challenges as opportunities for improvement.

Behavior #9: Engage and include others when making decisions or changes.

Behavior #10: Acknowledge and value the contributions of others.

If you scored 85 to 100, you are probably feeling fairly safe in your circumstances. If you scored between 65 and 84, you’re probably feeling a little vulnerable, but nothing critical. If you scored between 45 and 64, it is very important to identify areas for improvement and use the process and tools in this book to improve your level of indispensability. If you scored 44 or lower, you are in a very vulnerable situation. But you can change the situation very quickly with the clear intention to do so and by following the process and steps in this book.



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Summary: MAKING YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

Making Choices to Be More Indispensable

The choices we make have a direct impact on the results of our life. We make an infinite number of choices each day, but there are six fundamental choices that will dictate our life experience. Each choice is presented with a preference for making yourself indispensable, and while clearly these aren't rules but options based on the context of the situation, each preference represents where people tend to have weaknesses that prevent them from becoming indispensable.

Choice #1: Purpose Driven or Goal Driven (the Master Choice)? Goals without a purpose behind them will generally create an “empty” feeling of going through the motions. When you are purpose driven, you are dedicated. When you are indispensable, not only are you purpose driven, but your purpose is “service” to others. Being purpose driven leads to fulfillment.

Choice #2: Play Big or Play Small? Some people say that life is a game. If so, you have to determine what game you are in and how you want to play. Once you make the choice to play big by honoring and generously sharing your talents and gifts, you will experience a greater level of self-confidence, a greater sense of contribution and fulfillment, and a greater sense of recognition by others.

Choice #3: Adaptable or Rigid? Rigidity can come in many forms, including your mind-set or beliefs, your behaviors, your communication or your attitude. No matter how hard we try to resist change and remain in control, we are doomed to fail. Changing times require you to continually ask questions. When you are indispensable, you are continually reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of your practices, your procedures, your assumptions and your beliefs.

Choice #4: We Centered or Me Centered? There is a choice to be made between caring for yourself at the expense of others and caring for yourself in support of others. We are connected and interdependent with others. The greater the “we,” the more indispensable you become.

Choice #5: Priority Focused or Activity Focused? Unfortunately, most people are caught in the cycle of “more is better” and, as a result, keep adding priorities to their already full set of activities. When you scatter your energy, effort and resources across too many priorities, you risk breakdown from the lack of focus and attention. The indispensable person assists in creating a sense of calm and confidence.

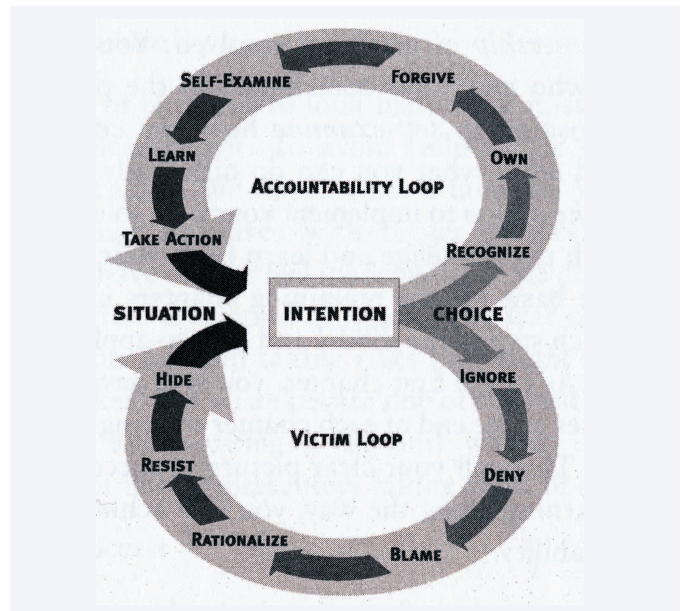
Choice #6: Value Others or Disregard Others? Many people want to prove their value to others and, in

so doing, neglect to acknowledge others for their contributions. Truly confident people have nothing to prove in terms of their value and, therefore, can share the value of success with others. Valuing others is really about expressing gratitude. Indispensable people are always looking for ways to help others grow. ●

The Road Map

The foundation of becoming indispensable lies in taking personal accountability on the job, at home and in your life. This road map gives you a clear, step-by-step process for avoiding the Victim Loop and stepping onto the Accountability Loop moving up the trail to indispensability.

Making yourself indispensable is the destination, and personal accountability is the road map.



Accountability is taking action that's consistent with your desired outcomes. Knowing your desired outcomes is the key to accountability. If you don't know where you are going, it is impossible to get there. In other words, if you aren't clear on your “Picture of Success,” it's almost impossible to be successful.

The Personal Accountability Model starts when a situation comes up — and it's usually a challenging one. Based on your *intention*, you have a *choice* as to how to respond. When you take the victim road, you *ignore* the problem, *deny* your involvement in it, and eventually *blame* someone else. Then you *rationalize* and justify why another person should take care of it and *resist* any attempt that others may make to get you involved. Finally, you *hide* to avoid dealing with it.

Summary: MAKING YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

Given the same situation, based on an intention to *stay accountable*, you make a different choice. You *recognize* the problem and take *ownership* of getting it resolved. You *forgive* yourself and others who may have contributed to the problem. You are then in a position to *self-examine* how you contributed to the problem and *learn* what you can do differently to resolve it. Finally, you *take action* to implement your new solutions so that you can deal with the challenge and learn from your experience. This is the Accountability Loop. ●

The Victim Loop

The Victim Loop is a way of life in which “stuff” happens to you. You don’t seem to have a choice.

The surest sign is that you feel stuck — stuck in feeling angry, hurt, frustrated or discouraged; stuck in your job; stuck in your relationship at home; or stuck in physical pain. Everyone seems against you and you can’t seem to get a break. Victimization is experienced regardless of intelligence, position of power, age or previous success.

There are six common phases of victimization that make up the Victim Loop. They don’t always come in this order, but there is an underlying logic to how they progress. That’s why we call it the Victim Loop.

Phase #1, Ignore It: “Problem? What Problem?” The problem with ignoring problems is that they usually get bigger — problems turn into crises, crises turn into breakdowns, breakdowns turn into lost jobs and eventually going out of business. When problems are ignored in organizations, they become underlying diseases that, when surfaced, elicit the response “That’s just the way we do things around here.”

Phase #2, Deny It: “It’s Not My Problem.” Denial is a tricky place to be because if the problem isn’t yours to solve, it is someone else’s responsibility, which leads you to further entrench yourself in victimization. For the organization, problems don’t get resolved unless someone is assigned responsibility.

Phase #3, Blame Someone: “It’s Their Fault.” The rules of finger-pointing are pretty easy to follow: surface a problem, find someone else to blame, and blame away. There is always someone or something to blame. And you can even feel a false sense of control, domination and power by blaming others. This can go on with no end in sight and only leads us deeper into the Victim Loop.

Phase #4, Rationalize It: “I Have Evidence.” It’s hard to maintain the blame game without proof that we are right. We do anything to justify our lack of

ownership. We convince others that our boss’s decision was wrong, that we don’t have enough resources or that it’s not our fault that our performance isn’t better.

Phase #5, Resist It: “You’re Not My Boss!” When all else fails ... get angry — throw a tantrum. Control is the issue and power is the goal. This is the point in the Victim Loop when conflict and irrational action start escalating. You are far from the original situation and you are still not dealing with it.

Phase #6, Hide from It: “You Can’t Find Me.” Having exhausted all other methods of avoiding the situation, you go into hiding. And, boy, are there lots of good ways to hide. Create busywork. Create unnecessary meetings, paperwork and projects. Generate a crisis. But the best way to hide? Stay confused!

When the pity party is over, you’re stuck with yourself in the self-doubt created by knowing that you aren’t achieving your goals or your Picture of Success. ●

Intention: Take Charge of Your Life

Intention to take charge of your life is no small task. Creating a clear intention is part of developing that Picture of Success that represents your destination and changes your focus from victimization to accountability.

The Mind-Set for High Performance

It is impossible to become indispensable without a mind-set for high performance. There are three essential elements to raising the bar on your mind-set of excellence. When put in place, these three things will lead you to a compelling destination that will drive every action you end up taking along the Accountability Loop to achieve your dreams of becoming indispensable.

Step 1: State Your Intentions and Set Your Ultimate Goals. There is no accountability without intention. Intention represents the desired purpose, goals and outcomes that are the basis of your plans and actions.

When creating your intentions, be true to yourself, your best self containing the wisdom, practicality and intuition that knows what is best for you and others. Your intention represents the combination of your purpose and “playing big” based on your unique talents, capabilities and opportunities to make a meaningful difference for others.

You can create intentions around any goals you want to accomplish. Your imagination is what limits your intention. So what’s stopping you from achieving anything you

Summary: MAKING YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

want? Declaring your intention clearly is the foundation for maintaining a positive focus and breaking free from the Victim Loop. It represents your commitment.

Step 2: Picture What Success Looks Like to You. The Picture of Success enables your intention to come alive. The Picture of Success describes the attitudes, behaviors and actions you would be exhibiting once you are accomplishing your intention. It's difficult to reach a goal if you don't know what it looks, sounds and feels like.

Your Picture of Success should include descriptive behaviors and actions you are taking that demonstrate what you are doing differently to achieve better results. As you read it and use it, you will refine it. It doesn't have to be perfect. It is a work in progress and the only way to fail is to not do it at all.

Step 3: Test Your Picture of Success. The challenge of creating a Picture of Success is that it can sound good but not be effective. There are a few ways to test your Picture of Success. Testing your Picture of Success begins with reviewing the six choices to being indispensable that we discussed earlier.

Does your Picture of Success clearly articulate your intention and purpose? Does it convey a clear picture of what you would be doing and how you would be communicating in order to "play big" and courageously? Does it include your ability to adapt as conditions change? Does it include impact on and benefit to others to ensure that you are "we centered?" Does it provide you a clear sense of priorities? Does it include how you will demonstrate your value of others? ●

Recognize Your Current Reality

Call it what it is. Whatever it is. Be honest. Until you know what you are dealing with and are willing to call it out, you can't do anything differently. Recognizing your current reality is the first step in taking accountability to manifest your picture of success.

Recognizing your current reality has two main parts: identifying as many strengths and opportunities for improvement as possible and prioritizing the opportunities for improvement based on your current situation and what will move you forward to achieve your Picture of Success.

Common practice is to compare where you are today with current standards of excellence or with where you have been. While this is important for acknowledging progress, it can lead you astray from your intention and off the Accountability Loop. Achieve your Picture of Success to fulfill your intention, not just to get better.

Your current reality measures the gap between your current performance and your desired future state described by your Picture of Success.

But how do you assess your current reality without going into negative self-judgment — feeling bad or getting discouraged? There are two ways to build your inner strength to face your current reality — a neutral frame of mind and a courageous heart.

With a neutral mind, you don't need to feel threatened by the truth. It is what it is, and there is no need to hide or judge.

You must have a strong heart and confidence in yourself to face your current reality. When you are accountable and on your road to becoming indispensable, you have the courage to search for the truth even when it could cause you disturbance. You don't cover up. You don't escape. You don't pretend. You boldly admit what doesn't work and you trust that you have the strength and resources to eventually find solutions. ●

The Power of Taking Ownership

When you own something, you are more likely to take care of it. You are more likely to feel responsible for it.

When FedEx was first created, its founder, Frederick W. Smith, asked his employees to forgo their normal salary for weeks in order to save the company. Those who could, stayed, as owners of that problem, for the bigger purpose of keeping the company alive until it was successful. It was a risk. There were no guarantees, but that is what taking ownership is about: putting yourself on the line for your purpose, for sharing your gifts and making a contribution.

Before the economic downturn, I had failed to hire a financial planner to help us manage our increased funds. I had assumed that our business would continue to grow and neglected to make any contingency plan or recovery plan. And when other members of my management team had wanted to increase our expenses beyond what I was comfortable with, I had sat back in silence. During that time, we had lost sight of our purpose: to be a boutique company with a unique service that produces measurable results unlike those of other consulting firms. In one way or another, I discovered that I had *created* the problem by spending money that should have been saved for a rainy day, I had *promoted* it by participating in decisions that raised our overhead with little return, and I had *allowed* it to happen by not voicing my concerns when I had them.

Summary: MAKING YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

I thought that admitting my accountability for ownership of the downfall of my business would make me feel even worse and more depressed. But the opposite was true. I was completely energized to see that I had a role in the downfall because that meant I could have a role in changing the situation. I got my power back by taking ownership. When you feel victimized and want to get your power back, take ownership by looking for the opportunity to learn and create a new pathway to your Picture of Success. It is very freeing.

Once you take ownership, problems are no longer running you. You are in command of them, even though they're not yet solved. ●

Gaining Strength Through Forgiveness

Removing the barriers associated with guilt, resentment, disappointment and discouragement provides the strength necessary to move on in the Accountability Loop. The most indispensable and accountable people make mistakes, but their resilience begins with forgiveness and releasing the negativity of human error that plagues us all.

You will make mistakes, not keep a commitment to your boss and probably even not keep an agreement you made with yourself. It's bound to happen. Accountability is not about being perfect!

If you're making yourself indispensable, you're pushing the envelope on the status quo, taking calculated risks and inventing new pathways to higher levels of excellence. You are bound to make mistakes on that path.

The measure of accountability is based more on how you handle mistakes, mishaps and breakdowns than on getting everything right all the time. The reason forgiveness is the overlooked critical key to accountability is that when you don't forgive, you end up in either the blame game of making a problem someone else's fault or the excuses game of finding all of the reasons you shouldn't be blamed.

The sooner you forgive the humanness involved in any breakdown or inadequacy, the faster you move back to the Accountability Loop. And that is your only way to eventual success. Forgiveness is demonstrated by your actions to remedy the situation, not your words of apology.

The purpose of forgiveness is to let go of the baggage you don't need. What matters is that forgiveness is done for your own benefit. You become more confident when you forgive, knowing that you aren't stuck with your past and soon will be developing your better

Letting Go: A Zen Tale

A young monk was traveling with an older monk when they came to a river. On the bank was an attractive, finely clothed young woman who could not cross the river without ruining her gown. The young monk heeded his vows to avoid contact with the opposite sex and looked away. But his elder walked directly to the woman and offered his help. He carried her across the muddy river and put her down. After she thanked him, the woman and the monks parted ways.

The young monk was shocked by the elder's behavior, and he silently stewed about it until, hours later, he could not hold his tongue any longer. "How could you do that?" he complained. "It is a violation to even look at a woman and you spoke with her. You carried her!"

The older monk thought about his young companion's criticism and, smiling, he replied, "I put her down on the other side of the river hours ago, but you are still carrying her."

future. Forgiveness represents taking the high road — the accountable road. ●

Self-Examination to Foster Solutions

Self-examination can be one of the most fun stages of accountability. It's an exploration of options without restriction.

Whenever there is a breakdown or problem, the most effective way to begin self-examination is to ask, "How am I creating, promoting or allowing this problem to continue?"

To effectively carry out the accountable step of self-examination to foster solutions, you have to combine analysis, intuition, innovation, creativity and patterning. All of these are what I refer to as critical thinking — the art and skill of looking at a problem or situation from several vantage points.

Objectivity. The ability to be unbiased and open to all other ideas about a problem and its solution.

Global View. The ability to see the "big picture" surrounding a problem or situation.

Detail. The ability to see all the fine and minute aspects of the problem or situation.

Perspective. The ability to see a situation from different points of view.

Summary: MAKING YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

Symptom-Source Link. The ability to discern the difference between symptoms and root causes of the problem or situation.

Integration. The ability to balance and connect all critical thinking approaches in order to derive the optimal solutions to a problem.

Being indispensable doesn't mean that you are solving every problem by yourself. In fact, that is a good way to become dispensable very quickly. The more indispensable you are, the more you include others in your problem-solving process.

You can avoid a lot of grief or shorten the time you are stuck in frustration, disappointment or discouragement by using self-examination to ask yourself questions that will lead to new perspectives, new approaches, new thinking and, ultimately, a different way to do things to get better results.

It is very exciting to have fresh ideas, new responses and alternative solutions for moving forward on your Picture of Success. *Self-examination to foster solutions* puts you in the driver's seat for learning, making decisions and eventually taking action to make a difference. ●

Master Learner — Your Default Response

Self-examination is the appetizer, while learning is the main course. Learning is the most important competency for anyone wanting to be indispensable — learning new skills, learning new habits, learning to correct mistakes and learning to improve performance. The day you stop learning is the day you become dispensable.

Three Easy Steps to Learning

The first step is becoming *aware* of what works and what doesn't work about your role in the problem area that has surfaced. This could be as simple as the awareness that you are getting defensive or anxious, which causes you to communicate in a less effective manner.

The second step to effective learning is *understanding*. Do you understand what is behind your behavior, reaction or attitude?

The third step to learning is *motivation*. What is motivating you to make the change? Maybe you are internally motivated by your desire for a different result or maybe you are motivated by external drivers.

The foundation for any master learner is curiosity. Curiosity allows you to explore and try new things just to find out if you can stumble across a process, method

or approach that not only breaks the norm, but also discovers a creative way to achieve better results.

Teachers and Students

We are all teachers and students. While my clients hire me as an expert in accountability and making yourself indispensable, my view is that I am a student of accountability. It is being a student that has caused others to consider me an expert.

Learning is the outcome of every relationship we are in and every action we take. It begins in the relationship between parents and children. In relationships, we are constantly learning from and teaching each other.

Because we're all teachers and students of one another, it is important that we take responsibility for what we are learning from others in teaching those close to us. We must become aware of the impact we have on others as well as the impact others have on us to determine if adjustments need to be made in our relationships — whether at work or at home. ●

Take Action to Be Successful

“Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there.” — Will Rogers

Nothing you have read on these pages will do you any good if you don't take action on what you have learned.

It doesn't matter if you take a wrong step, but the surest way to fail at reaching your goals is to remain in place. The minute you stop moving, you ruin your chance of reaching your final destination. Remember the definition: Accountability is taking action consistent with your desired outcomes.

Action also builds other people's trust in you. When you take action — even if you don't always fully accomplish your goals — you prove that you're willing to accept challenges and try new things. You become the one who gets things done.

There are six strategies you can use to support efficient action:

1. Keep Your Eyes on Your Picture of Success. What is the purpose being served? What accomplishment do you intend the action to achieve?

2. Do Differently. This doesn't mean doing the same thing “louder.” Doing differently is finding a way — any way — to take a different action than you did last time.

3. Take Small Steps. Break your actions down into small steps. Don't try to change everything at once. Go for small changes and let success breed success!

Summary: MAKING YOURSELF INDISPENSABLE

4. Keep Moving. Movement is the key to success. It's by moving that you gain the experience to determine what works and what doesn't work.

5. Use Your Support Network. Without support, you are putting too much pressure on yourself to keep the ball rolling or to pick up the pieces when something breaks.

6. Have a Recovery Plan. When you have a recovery plan, the breakdown results in the implementation of "next steps" rather than the occurrence of the next crisis that causes paralysis, blame and failure. ●

The Missing Step: Celebrating Success

There are so many reasons for not celebrating success. You don't have time. You have to start the next project. It wasn't a big enough success to warrant celebration — there were even mistakes. While these all seem like valid reasons for skipping the step of celebration, none of these excuses are good ones. In fact, they represent a clear step into the Victim Loop. Remember, the first two steps in the Victim Loop are ignore and deny.

It seems simple to take accountability for success. But nothing could be further from the truth. Taking accountability for success means setting yourself and others up for even greater success. It comes with the responsibility to inspire, to teach, to prepare for future success and to sustain current success. And this doesn't happen through a simple pat on the back.

There are six steps for taking accountability for success:

1. Recognize Your Success. Ultimately, recognizing success is simply expressing gratitude — giving thanks for all the supportive effort, guidance, participation and problem-solving that led to achievement.

2. Own Your Success. It is important to acknowledge the contributions you made to the success. Regardless of their role and how much they were involved, it is important to acknowledge all of the owners who contributed to success.

3. Forgive the Mistakes You Made Along the Way. Achieving success will almost always include imperfections and mistakes. But to reap the benefits of learning it is critical to forgive the mistakes and celebrate the wins, no matter how small or large.

4. Self-Assess Your Success. By not conducting an assessment to learn from your success, you miss out on an opportunity not only to celebrate, but to learn. What worked well? What did you do differently that led to your success?

5. Learn from Your Success. Learning what specifically worked the best while you were accomplishing your goal, project or assignment means that you will have a greater chance of repeating your success. You will be able to replicate the best of your efforts to accomplish your next goal.

6. Take Action to Celebrate. What is the most meaningful celebration you can create for yourself? Your approach should not be determined by your needs alone. It should be based on the needs of the recipients and the reactions you desire from them. ●

Living an Indispensable Life

By now you have probably learned one of the most valuable lessons for becoming indispensable — nothing can stop you except you! You can be slowed down and challenged, but as long as you are alive and continue making indispensable choices and demonstrating accountability, you will prevail.

Being indispensable is a never-ending pursuit of higher levels of excellence and service to others.

Making yourself indispensable doesn't mean you have "arrived." It only means that you have developed the inner strength and outer ability to take on bigger challenges and help even more people. It is very similar to building muscle. You can use weightlifting to make yourself stronger, but what happens when you stop lifting weights? The muscle atrophies.

One of the best ways to keep up your accountable behaviors and indispensable choices is to help others become indispensable. The greatest leaders are not those who achieve a business result. The greatest leaders are those who help other people become great leaders who get great results. Develop your plan for sharing the keys presented in *Making Yourself Indispensable* so that your team, your organization and your family become more accountable, more trusting, more successful and more fulfilling. Let it begin with you and never let that flame within you burn out. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Making Yourself Indispensable*, you'll also like:

- 1. *Linchpin* by Seth Godin.** Godin provides the essential steps to become the critical contributor on which every organization counts.
- 2. *StandOut™* by Marcus Buckingham.** StandOut introduces the next-generation strengths assessment from Buckingham, co-author of *Now, Discover Your Strengths*.
- 3. *Clutch* by Paul Sullivan.** Do you choke under pressure or are you "clutch"? In this executive book summary of Paul Sullivan's book *Clutch*, you will learn how to successfully perform under extraordinary pressure.