

High-Potential Leaders Are Crucial to Helping Businesses Adapt and Thrive in the Digital Age

If you are one of those leaders who has high potential to lead a large, complex organization, this is your time. Companies need you. Get ready to accelerate your growth by taking charge of it. This book will show you how to build the skills and capabilities you'll need, and how and when to make big moves that will get you ready and battle test you.

If you're an HR expert charged with building your company's leadership pipeline, your job must change. You need a new approach to find and develop leaders who can deal with the immense complexity and challenges businesses face. Using this book as a guide, you will be able to redefine leadership potential and let your high-potential leaders set their own paths. The last chapter will help you rethink your role in supporting them as they drive their own exponential growth.

The Urgent Need for High-Potential Leaders

The biggest concern I hear among senior leaders today is, How can we stay relevant in this increasingly complex and fast-moving world? The truth is, some can't. They're not equipped to help their companies reinvent themselves for the new game. Nor are the leaders next in line, who've been groomed to fit the same obsolete mold.

Companies big and small are coming to realize that it will take leaders with a different way of thinking and different skills to reinvent the business. They are having to redefine the very notion of what a successful leader looks like. Now the race is on to find those with high potential to lead the company onto new paths in a world of constant change.

You've heard it before—the changes being wrought by things like digitization, algorithms, and data analytics will be as radical as the Industrial Revolution. We've already seen companies such as Facebook, Google, and Amazon cause revolutions in consumer behavior and reach the stratosphere in market value in record time. More of these are yet to come, led by people with the capacity to conceive and grow them. In a decade, the \$72 trillion global economy is on a trajectory to be 50 percent greater than it is today. Products and services not yet invented will give consumers entirely different experiences and make some companies obsolete.

This is a time for leaders who can thrive in the face of relentless change, complexity, and uncertainty. Many companies have such leaders buried at lower levels. They need to find them, develop them, and find ways to use them to help the company adapt. And they need to move fast on this. “Born digital” companies are on the prowl and will gladly poach whatever high-potential talent traditional companies overlook.

High-potential leaders themselves shouldn't just sit back and wait to be discovered. They should decide for themselves whether they have what it takes to someday take a large team, business unit, function, or the whole corporation to new heights and make a plan to ready themselves to create the future.

What “High Potential” Means Now

Everyone has potential to grow, but not everyone, not even every person with leadership skills, has the potential to lead a large, complex organization in the near and distant future.

Amid everything that is new and different, today's high-potential leaders, or "hipos," must be able to identify the untapped opportunities their companies will pursue and mobilize the organization. This is a weakness in many older business leaders today. Understandably. Throughout their careers, growth was defined as improving on things that already existed: increasing profits through cost cutting, tweaking products for adjacent markets, or acquiring other companies in the same industry. More radical changes like reinventing the entire business model, reshaping the entire ecosystem of supply and distribution, or rethinking the entire customer experience have been rare in the life of a company.

It's now clear that businesses might need to be transformed more than once in a leader's tenure, and today's hipos must be prepared for that. They should exhibit three characteristics that the previous generation of leaders did not always need:

1. **They imagine on a large scale.** Hipos can take in a ton of information from many different sources and almost instantly find what could be meaningful. In doing so, they pick up clues about what might be possible, and they dream big. In the past, wild dreams or visions of things that don't yet exist might have been considered delusional, but hipos don't see it that way. If they personally lack the capability to realize the picture they have in their heads, they know they can use technology, algorithms, and other people's capabilities to make it real. They are psychologically prepared to scale it up very fast—and go after it fearlessly.

Alphabet, now the umbrella company for Google and other subsidiaries, has a whole population of people who are working to solve the world's biggest problems. Google X, the semi-secret group charged with developing revolutionary ideas, created the driverless car and Google Glass, which is poised to take hold as a key element in the Internet of Things.

It's not just start-ups that need this kind of imagination. It's every company. Hipos have it.

2. **They seek what they need to make it happen.** I had just finished speaking to a group of executives about how to set up an advisory board when a young man approached me. "Do you have a minute?" he asked. Polite but straightforward, he continued, "I run a small company, much smaller than the corporations you're used to working with. Would you consider advising me?" It's no secret that I've worked with a lot of big, well-known companies, but he was undaunted. What I came to learn was that he had sized up his market opportunity, and it was huge. He wanted to grow his company very fast and was seeking help building the capacity for it.

Hipos will talk to anyone. They don't just stay within the hierarchy. A young Steve Jobs didn't hesitate to call Bill Hewlett, cofounder of tech giant Hewlett-Packard, when he was seeking technical help. Pat Gallagher was young and relatively inexperienced when he was groomed to take over his family's Chicago-based insurance brokerage in 1983. Having run only the sales force, he wanted to understand what the CEO job entailed, so he reached out to the CEO of McDonnell Douglas, a company far different and much bigger than his own. The CEO took time to talk to him, and Gallagher eventually took his firm to number four in the United States. Forums like the G100 and Singularity University provide opportunities for that.

3. **They understand the concept of the ecosystem.** Companies rarely act alone in delivering their product or service. Hipos understand the complex web of participants, from the makers of small parts that go into larger ones to the mom-and-pop shops or FedEx fleet that delivers the product. Walmart became a juggernaut of low cost because of how it used its tight relationships with suppliers, the largest of which were

housed right at the Bentonville, Arkansas, headquarters. Walmart schooled its suppliers in state-of-the-art logistics that reduced inventories but kept store shelves stocked with merchandise that turned over very quickly. Both Walmart and the supplier grew, and consumers benefited from low prices.

Digital-age versions of rethinking the business ecosystem abound. Apple's iPod was a nifty device, but it became a sensation because iTunes changed the way music was packaged, priced, and distributed. Amazon thrives on algorithms that predict a customer's need and delivers it through an ecosystem of sellers, purchase options, and delivery methods.

Hipos have the ability to see the total picture, to conjure a mental image of the web of interrelationships, and to think imaginatively about how to redesign it.

Hipos will come primarily from the fifty-three million millennials in the work force now. This generation has been steeped from an early age in video, the Internet, and social media. They grew up in an information-rich world and a global social hive, interconnected and living with unprecedented social transparency. They've had instant access to vast amounts of information from around the world, conditioning their brains to rapid thinking and communication. Text messaging and Twitter train them to be brief and to the point, a sharp contrast with the belabored PowerPoint presentations the baby boomers were expected to use. With a wide mental bandwidth and ability to absorb key information, they can construct a bigger picture very quickly. All that plays to a hipo's advantage:

They adapt quickly to the new—because they've seen brands, trends, celebrities, and social conventions rise and fall overnight.

They have diverse social networks—because they're connected to people far beyond their local environment, they've traveled, and they've been exposed to a wide array of viewpoints through social media.

They have a change-the-world mentality—because they've seen unknowns become well-knowns with one viral video, and college dropouts become billionaires before they turned thirty-five. They've seen Mark Zuckerberg in a hoodie speaking to an audience of buttoned-down security analysts and Elon Musk launch SpaceX, not to mention beautiful electric cars. The success stories are known across the globe, inspiring hipos everywhere.

The qualities of today's hipos are clearly present in born digital companies, where Jeff Bezos of Amazon, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, Reed Hastings of Netflix, and Reid Hoffman of LinkedIn are the poster children. They also exist in established companies, in people like Jeff Immelt, CEO of GE, and Brent Saunders, CEO of Allergan. And they are found in scores of entrepreneurs who have left big companies to start their own businesses.

Not every hipo is destined to be a chief executive who creates or transforms a business; they can make huge contributions in other top positions to keep their companies at the cutting edge. Mary Anne Elliott, for example, is head of HR at Marsh, where she works closely with the CEO and CFO in a pivotal role to transform and steer the business. Bonnie Hill was an accomplished CEO and college dean and a director of several boards; at Home Depot she was instrumental in fixing the board's approach to compensation when it came under fire and rebuilding shareholder relations.

Earlier classes of hipos had the same intelligence and ambition today's hipos have, but they met different criteria. In most cases, they were picked by their immediate boss, usually because of their extraordinary and consistent performance in the existing job.

Performance was largely measured by numbers, with little digging for how the results were achieved. It helped to be good at managing upward, communicating well, and pleasing the boss by taking things off his plate.

Some basic leadership traits like high integrity and the ability to communicate are constant, and performance always matters, but they are mere table stakes. Without the qualities and abilities the fast-changing world now demands, a leader is not likely to succeed in a high-level leadership job, at least not for long.

An Important Distinction

Some people are *high-potential individuals*. Let's say you're a terrific thinker and analyst in your own specialty, or you have an exceptional talent or expertise. You do your most productive work in private, free from distractions that intrude on solving the problem at hand. When you are interrupted by a meeting or conference, you can't wait to get back to your real work.

It doesn't take deep psychological analysis to see that such people are not going to excel at leading other people. High-potential individuals would be losing ground if they set their sights on a job where they have to deal with all sorts of people and relationship issues and do the kind of strategic thinking they have little interest in. They may later develop the requisite skills or interest, at which time they could be reevaluated. But for now, they should stay with their strengths. There's no shortage of great opportunities for talented individuals.

Craig Silverstein, for example, was Sergey Brin's and Larry Page's first employee at Google. They hired him to help build their search engine while all were still at Stanford University. Not long after joining the company, he told *The Wall Street Journal* he felt he should try a managerial role. But after several months he backed away from it, having decided he "wasn't very good at it." Silverstein became Google's director of technology and stayed

with the company until 2012. (He left to join another start-up, the nonprofit online Khan Academy, which aims to educate students in math, science, humanities, and finance in developing countries with scarce educational resources.)

High-potential *leaders*, on the other hand, multiply the energy and skills of others. Their value lies not in what they can personally accomplish, but in how they can bring together and motivate other people to accomplish much more than any one individual could do on their own. They *integrate* specialized expertise, differing viewpoints, and narrow interests to create new solutions and make better, faster decisions than would otherwise happen.

Getting Hipos There Faster

Hipos reach their leadership potential through the disciplined routine practice of essential skills combined with periodic leaps. Developing skills through daily, weekly, monthly practice may seem uninspiring, but many a CEO has failed because of weakness in one or two of them. Skill building, however, goes only so far. An essential part of a hipo's progress is taking *big leaps* in scope, complexity, and ambiguity. Jumping into challenging new situations not only tests the person, but it's how hipos build the higher-order skills and judgment they'll need to run a large organization today. It accelerates growth.

Mark Fields joined Ford Motor Company as one of many bright young leaders, but he pressed for jobs that others didn't want. He took a job in Argentina running sales and marketing, then became head of the Argentine unit when it was struggling. From there, he went to Mazda in Japan, which Ford had a large stake in. He inherited a dispirited team, an unfocused brand, and a financial sinkhole. Like his previous leaps, this one challenged him to diagnose what needed fixing and to get it done fast in a completely unfamiliar context. "I always choose to run to the fire," he told *The Wall Street Journal's* Joann Lublin in March 2016.

Fields quickly determined that the way to regain lost ground at Mazda was to take a different approach to product design, to make the products distinctive from the competition's so they weren't just competing on cost-efficiency and price. To turn the company around, however, people had to work together across functions. That was easier said than done. The Japanese worked in rigid silos, and speaking up in meetings was taboo. Fields had to break the code of silence to get ideas and information flowing cross-functionally. Breaking into smaller teams and continually encouraging people to speak up eventually worked, and people rallied behind a unified plan.

Success in Japan was followed by success in Europe and North America, and when Alan Mulally retired as CEO of Ford in 2014, Mark Fields, at fifty-three, was his successor.

Despite Ford's good health, challenges abound: where and how fast to expand, which technologies to adopt, who to partner with, and how to adapt to consumer change. Success is a work in progress, but Fields is well prepared, having tested and developed his skills in team building along with his capacity to make decisive moves in complex circumstances.

Until recently, leadership development at most companies was largely ad hoc. Hipos depended heavily on their bosses to not only recognize them but also to help them grow. It's more common now for HR departments to be involved and send promising leaders to outside education programs at places like Harvard or Wharton, or to have them participate in one-week programs to teach soft skills like awareness and empathy, or to get them a mentor or coach. Many companies rotate people among geographies or divisions, often using a two-year schedule to round people out.

Some companies—J&J, Humana, Unilever, BlackRock, Marsh, and GE, to name a few—are further ahead. GE, for example, has long been at the cutting edge, and its approach continues to evolve. For decades GE held a series of annual meetings called Session C, in which the CEO, CHRO, and other business leaders identified

and tracked the hipos in each of GE's businesses. People were identified based on past performance and on the higher ups' view of the person's potential to move to higher levels. Those hipos became a resource for and responsibility of the corporation's top-most leaders. Hipos were sent to GE's famous Crotonville training center and put on task forces to solve real business problems, and the big bosses got to see who they really were as they interacted with peers from across the corporation. It was not uncommon for the CEO and CHRO to reassign a hipo to an entirely different post in one of GE's other businesses, moving people from the audit function to industrial to medical, for example, depending on what kind of developmental experience they thought the person needed.

Sometimes a hipo was moved out of a business then back to a job in the old business but several levels higher. Former CEO Jack Welch is known to have moved hipos two or three steps higher in the organizational hierarchy, and he himself experienced that as a junior manager. Rigorous reviews were a constant, so people were tested for high performance and values along the way, and they were richly rewarded to stay with the company as their experiences in different countries, business units, and positions broadened them.

We know from people like Michael Dell, Mark Zuckerberg, and Bill Gates that, given the right opportunities, it's possible for high-potential leaders to expand extremely fast. Every time those high-growth companies had an expansion burst, the complexity of the leader's job increased: more employees to organize, new governmental bodies to contend with, more foreign cultures to understand, more consumers to please, all against a backdrop of ever-changing technology and competition. These leaders became household names because they kept learning, adapting, and building their skills to quickly master the complexity, create a clear path, and execute it by mobilizing others.

At most companies, the career track for hipos is slower. People move step by step, often vertically within one business function.

The development opportunities they're offered are one-size-fits-all. The next Mark Zuckerberg follows the same path at the same pace as every other leader.

Status quo leadership development programs leave companies at serious risk of coming up short when it comes time to fill the most important leadership jobs. And that time could be sooner rather than later. Even as hipos take greater control of their own growth, companies have an urgent need to change their approach to finding and growing them.

How Hipos Can Use This Book

Let's assume you meet the criteria for a hipo leader. You have ambition and there's demand for your skills, so of course you want to develop yourself as quickly as possible. Maybe your company has identified you as a high-potential leader, maybe not. Either way, you should take charge of your personal growth, because the development your company maps out for you might be too slow, and worse, might not build all the capabilities you'll need for the top-most jobs. You will likely be able to expand faster if you create your own development path.

The purpose of this book is to help you continually expand, to keep building your skills, and to define your next step or leap. I'll show you how to find opportunities and deal with the hurdles, while you double or triple your leadership capabilities and capacity every three to four years.

You can control your destiny. It used to be that information was power. But now we have the Internet and social media. It's easier than ever before to look at things from the outside in. You have a lot more access to sources of information online, and you can join networks and work on cross-industry, cross-country, cross-unit teams. You can know more, build a wider span of relationships, and learn fast, and a fast-changing world creates new opportunities for leaders every day.

Part I of this book will guide you through a series of leadership skills you should practice. It takes mindful repetition of these basic skills to master them. Just as professional athletes practice their physical skills, you need to practice the mental and emotional skills you'll use as part of the new generation of leaders. I'll explain how you can demonstrate your potential, be confident of delivering results, and avoid inessential work. Each chapter includes action items and resources, along with stories of other leaders you'll want to learn from.

You don't need to follow the order laid out in the table of contents. Each skill stands on its own, so you can create your own sequence. Just immerse yourself in one or two that seem relevant. Work hard on them; you will use them throughout your work life.

At the end of every week you should sit down to review your progress in developing your skill and outline your follow-up steps. Unless you have an impeccable memory for details, you should be armed with notes you've taken during the week. These don't have to be lengthy—in fact, they shouldn't be, just a few words that capture the essence of the activity, conversation, or thought. I make my brief notes either on a small ruled pad I carry in my pocket or on my smart phone. It might take less than fifteen minutes; it might take half an hour. Keep the learning simple and move on, but make it a routine. Larry Bossidy, the successful former CEO of Honeywell, took an hour every Sunday to reflect on the people who reported to him, how they were doing, what they might need, and how they might be deployed better. He became a fantastic judge of people. For example, it was he who recommended Dave Cote as his successor; it was a very good pick.

Part II will help you identify when and how to make exponential leaps in your capability and capacity, what you can expect to learn, and how to recover from a bad move. Not every leap requires a job change, but some will. You will likely have to take risks to test your ability to learn and grow, and there may be times when you have to leave your company. As you progress, you will face

hurdles, many of them social—annoyance, misunderstandings, and even jealousy. Your psychological as well as your cognitive strength will be tested.

Realizing your potential requires some degree of personal sacrifice. At every leap, you should weigh your ambition in the business world against what you want in the rest of your life. It is a balance that is different for everyone and might very well change over time. At some point, you may feel compelled to redefine success.

How Leadership Developers Should Use This Book

Senior leaders, HR departments, learning experts, and bosses can skip to Part III of this book, which will help you fill your pipeline with leadership talent that is relevant to the current business environment. You will have to face the dangerous reality that today's hipos will leave unless they can progress into the kinds of jobs they are capable of handling. That will require breaking conventions about job promotions and at times shaking up existing jobs to make room for the most promising hipos.

HR professionals will have to be assertive in working with management to transform the processes for identifying, developing, and retaining leaders. You should be prepared to challenge their basic assumptions and usual practices in favor of a new set of principles, like the ones mapped out in Chapter 9. It used to be that bosses controlled the fate of the people who reported to them; now, however, leadership talent should be seen as a resource to be managed and grown for the benefit of the organization as a whole. And development plans should be customized for each individual, using this book as a tool. The payback in terms of muscle building the organization will justify the time you spend on customizing careers for your hipos.

This is a time for creativity when it comes to providing chances for hipos to make leaps. It could be inclusion on a project team, or

having the person go with more senior people on client calls, as one large advertising firm has begun to do. McKinsey's managing director, Dom Barton, has young recruits, two at a time, shadow him for a year. The young people have real responsibilities, but the exposure to clients around the world expands their view of the work that lies ahead. Hipos at a big industrial Indian company are given background information and asked to do their own research on the industry and macro environment. They then meet with senior people, who explain the company strategy and solicit reactions from the younger people. It's not just a matter of yes-ing the bosses; the senior people are expected to pay attention to what the younger people say.

Leadership developers may have to step in to resolve problems when millennials break the unwritten rules and leapfrog others. Older people may not like reporting to someone who is relatively young and untested. It will take thoughtful care to maintain the overall health of the social system while developing and rewarding hipos in ways that get them ready and make them want to stay. Supporting hipos in building their people skills and emotional intelligence will also help smooth the way.

A Final Word

The newest generation of leaders feel strongly about wanting to make the world a better place. But who doesn't?

Economic growth, on the whole, improves the lives of people everywhere, and business leaders are the front-line drivers of growth. The better the leader, the more value is being added to the world, and the higher the standard of living. So we all have a stake in seeing high-potential leaders build the capabilities they need to succeed.

Practiced well, leadership is indeed a higher calling and a chance to make the world a better place.

Hipo Self-Test and Development Guide – Chapter 1

You should decide for yourself whether you are a “hipo,” regardless of whether your company has put you on their watch list. The following self-test can help you assess where you stand and also give you insights on where to focus as you develop your potential further.

Are You a High-Potential Leader?

Do the following descriptors apply to you? Is this what others would say about you? Consider delivering superior results that are sustainable a prerequisite, then rate yourself on each statement using the following scale:

- 1 = Not at all like me
- 4 = Frequently like me
- 2 = Occasionally like me
- 5 = Always like me
- 3 = Like me

Question Number	Question	Your Rating
1	I have crystal-clear goals for what I want to achieve.	
2	I enjoy coaching and developing people.	
3	I have big ideas for how to improve my organization.	
4	I regularly take time to review our customers' end-to-end experience.	
5	I have an insatiable drive to learn.	
6	I keep up with the latest technology.	
7	I have a change-the-world mentality.	
8	I'm comfortable and effective in delegating tasks.	
9	I tend to look at people's strengths and find ways to build on them.	
10	I have an effective process for assessing and testing my new ideas.	
11	I'm well informed on our top competitors and stay up-to-date on their strategy, leaders, and customer perceptions.	
12	I enjoy connecting with people and have a wide-ranging network.	
13	I take in a lot of information from many sources.	
14	I imagine on a large scale.	
15	I ensure that my team's work processes are efficient and effective.	

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Question Number	Question	Your Rating
16	When someone on my team isn't delivering results, I address the problem quickly.	
17	I create effective timelines for staging and managing my projects.	
18	I'm familiar with our company's providers and partners and the technology platforms that connect us.	
19	I have a regular reading practice that keeps me well informed.	
20	I can quickly process complex situations.	
21	I seek out whatever I need to make things happen.	
22	I have systems in place to effectively monitor and manage new information.	
23	In conversations, I tend to focus on positive solutions and common goals.	
24	I'm known as someone who asks thoughtful and incisive questions.	
25	I regularly scan news and media looking for emerging trends and game-changing people and events.	
26	I frequently have conversations with people from diverse backgrounds.	
27	I adapt quickly to new situations.	
28	I think in terms of the "big picture."	
29	I regularly review the people and projects I manage to ensure that the right people are in the right jobs.	
30	I communicate and collaborate across business units or functions to help achieve organizational goals.	
31	I'm known as a leader who can deliver results.	
32	I'm aware of how technological advances are impacting my industry and changing the competitive landscape.	
33	I enjoy attending learning events such as seminars, conferences, or classes.	
34	I have diverse social networks.	
35	I enjoy multiplying the energy and skills of those around me.	

Hipo Scoring Guide

To assess where you stand relative to other high-potential leaders, look up your responses (in the questionnaire above) to the specific question numbers listed below. Write your rating in the chart next to the question number. Then add up all the ratings to find your total score.

Your Scores		Sample		Interpreting Your Score	
Question Number	Your Rating	Question Number	Your Rating	Your Total Score	Likelihood That You Are a Hipo
6		6	4	41–50	Very High
7		7	5	31–40	High
13		13	3	26–30	Moderate
14		14	5	10–25	Low
21		21	4		
25		25	4		
27		27	4		
28		28	5		
34		34	3		
35		35	5		
TOTAL		TOTAL	42		

Development Scoring Guide

The scoring guides below will give you insights on where to focus your time and attention to get the most out of your potential. Repeat the same score transfer process you used before for each of the question numbers listed in the charts below.

Your Scores

Question Number	Your Score	Question Number	Your Score	Question Number	Your Score	Question Number	Your Score	Question Number	Your Score
1		2		3		4		5	
8		9		10		11		12	
15		16		17		18		19	
22		23		24		25		26	
29		30		31		32		33	
Skill #1 TOTAL		Skill #2 TOTAL		Skill #3 TOTAL		Skill #4 TOTAL		Skill #5 TOTAL	

Chapter 2 Increase the Return on Your Time (ROYT)	Chapter 3 Multiply the Energy and Skills of Those Around You	Chapter 4 Be a Master of Big Ideas and Execution	Chapter 5 Get to Know Customers, Competitors, and the Macro Environment	Chapter 6 Build Your Mental Capacity
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Sample									
Question Number	Your Score	Question Number	Your Score	Question Number	Your Score	Question Number	Your Score	Question Number	Your Score
1	3	2	5	3	3	4	3	5	5
8	4	9	5	10	1	11	4	12	5
15	3	16	4	17	3	18	3	19	2
22	4	23	5	24	4	25	3	26	5
29	2	30	4	31	3	32	4	33	4
Skill #1	16	Skill #2	23	Skill #3	14	Skill #4	17	Skill #5	21
TOTAL		TOTAL		TOTAL		TOTAL		TOTAL	
Chapter 2		Chapter 3		Chapter 4		Chapter 5		Chapter 6	
Increase the Return on Your Time (ROYT)		Multiply the Energy and Skills of Those Around You		Be a Master of Big Ideas and Execution		Get to Know Customers, Competitors, and the Macro Environment		Build Your Mental Capacity	

Interpreting Results

In the sample above, this leader is very strong in skills #2 and #5. His weakest skill is #3, so he might want to put more of his development time into the skills related to “Be a Master of Big Ideas and Execution.” However, the leader is also not as strong in Skill #1: “Increase the Return on Your Time.” Since this ROYT skill helps free up more time in your day, he could also start there and then use the extra time he creates to focus on increasing his strategy and execution skills.

Notice what skills you scored highest and lowest in. Do these results make sense to you? Does the pattern suggest which skill would be the best place to start? It’s up to you. Remember, you don’t need to read this book front to back. Start with the skill that will give you the most impact now.

Tips for Hipos—How to Use This Book

First, decide for yourself whether you are a hipo. It doesn’t matter whether you scored low on the self-test, or if your company doesn’t have you on their watch list. If you *decide* that you’re a hipo, you can use the ideas in this book to increase your potential and “up your game” as a leader.

You will advance faster if you create your own development path.

- Getting Started
 - Review your development scores on page 17 and then skim the checklists at the end of Chapters 2 through 6 to decide which skill is most important for you to expand first.
 - Read the chapter for that skill thoroughly. Print the Coaching Checklist at the end of the chapter, or scan it to store on your phone.
 - You'll reach your leadership potential through the disciplined routine practice of essential skills combined with periodic leaps.
 - The checklist supports your disciplined practice. It's what I would focus on if I were coaching you in person.
 - Keep the checklist where you'll see it every day, and build simple daily actions into your schedule to start developing the capabilities.
- Building Momentum
 - Take quick notes throughout the week and store them in a single notebook, file, or app.
 - At the end of every week, sit down to review your progress. A short session is fine, but make it a consistent weekly discipline.
 - Ask yourself these three questions:
 1. What new ideas have I experimented with?
 2. What have I learned?
 3. What follow-up steps will I take?
 - Developing skills through daily, weekly, monthly practice may seem uninspiring, but it's absolutely essential for reaching your goals.

- **Planning Your Leap**
 - Chapter 7 helps you identify when and how to make the big leaps that can exponentially increase your capability and capacity.
 - Plan to make your next leap after you are successful in your current role—when it has stopped stretching you or bringing any new learning opportunities.
 - Meanwhile, focus on building the hipo skills you need to be successful where you are right now.
 - You can also work on building the skills you'll need for the next step along your runway.
 - At every leap, weigh your ambition in the business world against what you want in the rest of your life. That balance is different for everyone, and might change over time.

Tips for HR and Leadership Developers—How to Use This Book

- Senior leaders, HR professionals, learning experts, and bosses can skip to Chapter 9. You'll find insights there on how the best companies I've worked with find, develop, manage, and monitor their hipos.
- If part of your role involves coaching others:
 - The checklists at the end of Chapters 2 through 6 will give you additional development ideas for them.
 - Chapter 7 can help you plan their next leaps and help them avoid the pitfalls that have derailed other hipos during their rapid advancement.

- And last but not least, don't forget about your own well-being.
- The checklist at the end of Chapter 8 will give you ideas on how to create a more balanced and fulfilling life for yourself, as well as for guiding the people on your team.
- Your role in developing the next generation of leaders who will drive our world economy is essential. Thank you for letting me be a part of your own learning journey as you fulfill this important task.

