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**SIR RICHARD BRANSON**

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# **ADMIRER**

**21 WAYS TO  
DOUBLE YOUR VALUE**

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**MARK C. THOMPSON  
BONITA S. THOMPSON**

Foreword by Marshall Goldsmith & Frances Hesselbein

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# 1

## Are You Valued?

**Our commuter jet was rolling out on the runway on Southwest Airlines just before dawn when there was a brief flash of lightning and a heavy downpour.** The flight attendant began the same dreary safety talk that nearly all the passengers could by now repeat from memory. But none of us could imagine what would happen next. Half the cabin was reading and the other half was already fast asleep at that hour. As we neared takeoff, the flight attendant was becoming increasingly annoyed at our total lack of interest in her lecture on how to fasten seatbelts. She suddenly shouted into the microphone.

“Listen up!” she demanded, swinging the seatbelt in the air. “You think you’re experts on this sort of thing, but if this plane falls out of the sky during this storm, I guarantee you’re not going to be napping, reading your Kindle, or chatting with your pals.” We couldn’t quite believe what we were hearing. “If we get into trouble up there, you’re going to be thinking about how you might have had a tiny chance at survival if you had listened to me! Then you’ll think about your loved ones and see your life pass before your eyes as we fall out of the sky.”

I dropped my iPad, which was supposed to be turned off by now anyway. Every last person in the cabin was now riveted, giving her our rapt attention, and wishing we had missed this flight.

“Okay, here’s what’s going to happen,” she continued breathlessly. “If there is a sudden crisis and a change in cabin pressure, these oxygen masks will pop out of the ceiling.” She whipped the canary yellow device from her pocket and hung it over my head like a noose. “Don’t just sit there waiting to be saved. This is your big chance! Take action! Grab the mask. Put it on yourself first, then put it on your child. And if you have more than one child,” she said smiling, “you might want to consider which one has the *most potential!*”

## Becoming Essential

The cabin burst into laughter, everyone relieved by the punch line. But the flight attendant’s dark humor stuck with me for the rest of the bumpy ride. It occurred to me that emergencies are not the only times we are forced to make hard decisions. Her morbid joke was also a brutal metaphor for the tough choices leaders make when resources are scarce and competition is fierce.

Your boss is constantly evaluating whom he values most—who will get the oxygen and opportunities. Companies are making sacrifices every day. Leaders can no longer afford to support a project just because the people working on it have great intentions. It has to demonstrate extraordinary value, rapid progress, and high return on effort or ROI. Your customers are making the same trade-offs about what to buy and what to ignore based on what *they* value—not necessarily what *you* love about your product or services—and they'll give you less time than ever to impress them.

If you want to become essential, you must both make sure you're delivering value to your MVPs and that they *recognize* that value.



You may deserve to be valued, respected, and admired for what you do, but your customers, your boss, and everyone else you know has a growing list of obligations and distractions competing for their time and attention. How do you break through the noise?

The answer is to better understand what drives value for your best customers, your boss, and your loved ones. These are your *Most Valuable People* or *MVPs*—those who make the biggest, most meaningful impact on your work and life. If you want to become essential, you must both make sure you're delivering value to your MVPs and that they *recognize* that value.

When your boss decides who or what deserves her attention, she is choosing among dozens of worthy candidates, and she is basing her choice on your *perceived* value to her. You won't be essential to her until you can demonstrate a deeper understanding of how she defines success, and how you're helping her achieve her immediate needs and future goals.

## Finding Value for Ourselves

Our passion for this concept of being valued began for both of us while we were kids in school, a time when we feared we had no potential. Both of us struggled with the symptoms of dyslexia—learning issues that impacted our sense of self-worth. And our parents already had their hands full. Both families, on too many occasions to count, wondered where their next meal or next mortgage payment would come from. At the time, none of us felt valued for our potential contribution.

Then we both dealt with personal tragedies that changed our lives forever. Bonita's older brother, David—a brilliant young man who was already contributing to the world of science—died of cancer at age 21. Mark's brother, Bob Jr., despite his doctor's best efforts, didn't get the oxygen he needed at birth. The brain damage was permanent. Both families saw their faith shaken and their resources stretched to the limit by those difficult circumstances. For as long as we can remember, we have been incredulous that two such valuable lives ended before our brothers could even begin to realize their potential.

These events inspired what would become our mission in life: To help people and their organizations realize their greatest potential *value*. To discover what makes people valuable, respected, and admired, we have conducted surveys

and engaged with hundreds of the world's most successful people face-to-face, from Nelson Mandela and Richard Branson, to Steve Jobs and the Dalai Lama. We met with the presidents of nations, Nobel laureates, Olympians, Academy Award winners, over 20 billionaires, and community servants without financial resources who are having great impact far from the public spotlight.

Through this work, we've seen major trends emerge and have developed tools for people to make success more sustainable, including a "game" they can play to uncover their deeper values and unlock possibilities and opportunities that will help you create a strategy for your future success.

In this book, we will share many of the lessons we've learned from our research and from our experiences playing the game with high achievers. As executive coaches who are also venture capitalists, we bet our hearts, souls, and life savings on helping winners whose potential isn't fully valued in the market and who deserve greater respect from those who matter most. One of the most important things we've discovered is that the best upside opportunities come along when you partner with and invest in talented people and organizations that are undervalued.

We believe that you deserve to be valued and admired for what matters. In the first two sections of this book, we will show you how to do that, and we'll share ways you can better appreciate what you have to offer the world. In the final section, we'll provide six fundamental strategies—using the word A.D.M.I.R.E. as the acronym—each of which offers tools to help you cut through the clutter and double your value to the people who matter most.

Let's get started!

# Epilogue

If you've ever had a child refuse to follow directions—no matter how influential you may have thought you are—you realized there is no such thing as control over other people. Whenever I think I'm "motivating" someone else, the truth is that they're choosing to be influenced based on their own beliefs, passions, past experiences, or fears even if they don't realize it. They're following their own urges based on how well I can connect with what they value, not what anyone else may believe is important, for better or for worse.

I was bringing our daughter, Vanessa, home from school one afternoon and remember feeling frustrated because she was refusing to take a class we had signed her up for. She was 8 at the time, and has always been a cooperative child, sweet and generous beyond her years. But she had drawn the line this time and wouldn't budge. It was something we wanted her to do and we were certain that she'd love it. There is no one in the world more important to us than Vanessa. We only want "what's best for her" (based on our values and beliefs) in every aspect of her life.


Our little girl stood there resolute in the doorway, her golden hair spotlighted by the afternoon sun. She smiled, hands on hips, in her pink and white floral spring dress with knee socks, shaking her braided ponytail back and forth in disapproval. She wasn't angry; she was just clear about her position on the matter and convinced that dad was misguided.

In a vain attempt to persuade her, I kneeled so I could look straight into those killer baby blue eyes. "Honey, this is going to be really fun," I begged. "There is no doubt in my mind that you're going to like it."

Vanessa sighed like a parent who knew better. She put her hand on my shoulder reassuringly as if I were now the grade-schooler.

“You are the best daddy in the whole world!” She gave me a hug. “But you aren’t the boss of my *likes*,” she said, clarifying my role. “You’re the boss of taking care of me.”

You can’t be the  
boss of someone  
else’s likes—  
it’s pointless to  
demand to be  
valued or admired.  
It has to  
be earned.



My heart skipped a beat. This kid has always been a wise, old soul. She mentors me whenever I become arrogant enough to believe I’m in charge of *everything*. You can’t be the boss of someone else’s likes—it’s pointless to demand to be valued or admired. It has to be earned. With the best of intentions, we often attempt to control the passions of the most valued people in our lives and work.

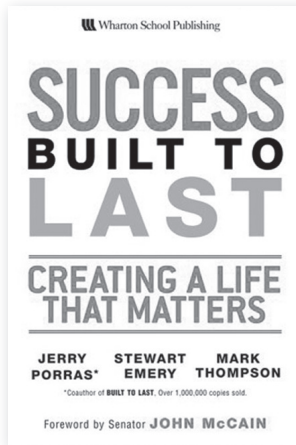
I’m not recommending lack of discipline or laissez-faire leadership. The best military commanders know that regular troops turn into heroes not because you gave orders, but because each soldier knew why the mission mattered and cherished that vision as their own. As parents, coworkers, or bosses, we’re accountable for many essential responsibilities, but we often confuse that authority with being in charge of everything. As leaders, our job is to inspire action and give guidance and tools to support the most valuable people in our work and our lives.

But we don’t control anyone else’s values. Our children are given to us on a short-term lease—and our best employees and closest friends are volunteers—they aren’t required to be loyal. The best people don’t have to stick with us to pursue their dreams.

Vanessa chose a path that day that took many of the best aspects of what we were recommending as parents and combined them with what she loved. She chose a different class that day from the one we preferred, but I learned a great deal about what she cared about so that we could support her (and guide her) more effectively as she grew up. I believe that our willingness as parents to listen to Vanessa and take her seriously throughout her young life is the reason she's still willing to listen to us as a teenager. That's what we need to learn about our MVPs: to take their dreams as seriously as we wish that they will take ours!

Starting back in grade school, Vanessa started to learn about how important it was to do something she deeply cared about. For that reason, she owned it, and recruited classmates to join her. Together they performed so brilliantly that she was admired, respected, and valued by her teachers and teammates (and parents!) for what matters most.

If you want to be admired for something meaningful—and double your value to the most valuable people—then turn up the oxygen in your life. Find a way to breathe air into the passions and values of your MVPs. When you appreciate what's valuable to you first, then seek sincerely to understand and connect with what drives the people who matter to you with depth and clarity, success is inevitable.



## Your Path to Become a *Built to Last* Leader

The sequel to business classic *Built to Last*, this book is one of Mark Thompson's most requested keynote presentations for corporations all over the world. It is based on the first-ever World Success Survey® and face-to-face interviews with entrepreneurs, billionaires, Nobel laureates, Olympians, and leaders of nations and communities. Email us to get FREE tools and learn more at: [Rebekkah@LeaderPowerTools.com](mailto:Rebekkah@LeaderPowerTools.com).

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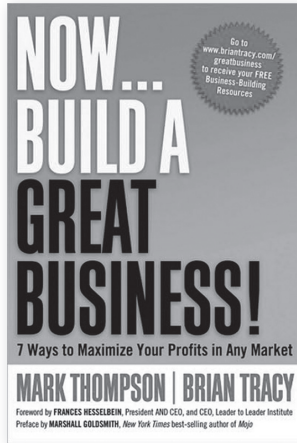
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## **HERE ARE 21 WAYS TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.**

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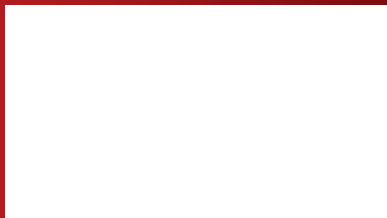
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