

#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

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**Self  
Leadership  
and The  
 One  
Minute  
Manager®**

Increasing Effectiveness Through  
Situational Self Leadership

**Discover the Magic  
of No Excuses**



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# **Self Leadership and the One Minute Manager®**

**Increasing Effectiveness Through  
Situational Self Leadership**

**Discover  
the Magic  
of No  
Excuses!**

**Ken Blanchard  
Susan Fowler  
Laurence Hawkins**

 **HarperCollins e-books**

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*To my mother, Dorothy Blanchard,  
who taught me how to take control of my own life  
before someone else did.*

—KEN BLANCHARD

*To my wonderful parents, Phyllis and Dick,  
who helped me realize the magic of self leadership  
by encouraging my curiosity, independence,  
and love of learning.*

—SUSAN FOWLER

*To my three daughters, Genevieve, Ashley, and Juliet,  
with the fondest hope that they may be beneficiaries  
of these self leadership concepts and tools  
and immerse themselves in the good life.*

—LAURIE HAWKINS



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## *Introduction*

In the last decade or so, the old deal in business has changed. In the past, the workforce traded loyalty for job security. If you showed up to work, made a good effort, and stayed out of trouble, you were usually secure in your job. When I graduated from college in the early 1960s, one of my friends got a job with AT&T and called home. His mother cried with joy. “You’re set for life,” she said.

Are you set for life today with any organization? No! Lifetime employment is a thing of the past. Over the last number of years, I’ve been trying to find out what the new deal is. Talking to top managers around the world, I’ve asked, “If it’s not loyalty you want from your workforce today, what do you want?” The answers have been pretty universal: “I want people who are problem solvers and are willing to take initiative. I want people working for me who act like they own the place.”

In other words, top managers, given a choice, would like empowered people—individuals they can respect and trust to make good business decisions, whether top managers are around or not.

Does the workforce object to that? No! In fact, I’ve asked people, “What do you want from an organi-

zation if job security is no longer available?” Again, the answers have been pretty universal. People today want two things. First, they want honesty. “Don’t lie to us. Don’t tell us at one point there will be no layoffs and then turn around a few months later and lead a major downsizing.”

Second, people want opportunities to constantly learn new skills. “At some point, if I have to look for a new job—either inside or outside my present organization—I want to have better skills and be more valuable than I was before.” What better way to become more valuable than to be able to take initiative, become a problem solver, and act and think like an owner.

Bingo! We have agreement. Then what’s the problem? Most people will argue that most managers are not willing to let go, that they still want to maintain control. These managers talk a good game but they still want to be in charge and prefer good subordinates who follow the lead of their superiors. Today’s reality in the world of work suggests that managers today, if they are to be effective, must think and act in different ways. In the 1980s, a manager typically supervised five people—the span of control was one manager to five direct reports. To be competitive, organizations today must be customer driven, cost effective, fast, flexible, and continuously improving. This has led to more mean-and-lean organizational structures where spans



of control have increased considerably. It is not uncommon today to find one manager for twenty-five to seventy-five direct reports. Add to that the emergence of virtual organizations—where managers are being asked to supervise people they never meet face-to-face—and we have an entirely different landscape emerging in the world of work.

The traditional hierarchy of leadership has evolved into a new order: empowerment of individuals. The problem is no longer how to get managers to “let go”—they have no choice anymore. The problem is how to get people to grab hold and run with the ball that is being handed to them.

A number of people are taking to this empowered environment like ducks to water. But many more are becoming immobilized. In that state they act like victims, think empowerment is a four-letter word, and view their manager as an incompetent enemy. You hear people complaining, “My boss hasn’t done this; my boss hasn’t done that!” The truth is that most bosses today can no longer play the traditional role of telling people what, when, and how to do things. Managers just don’t have time, and in many cases their people know more about the work than they do.

What’s the solution? How can we help people move from a victim mind-set to flourishing as empowered problem solvers and decision makers?

Enter Susan Fowler and Laurie Hawkins.

When my wife, Margie, and I started our company in 1979 (we now have a U.S. workforce of more than 250 people and affiliates in more than thirty nations), our first consulting partner was Laurie Hawkins. We had worked with him at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in the early 1970s, when I was a full-time professor and Margie was finishing her doctorate. When we decided to become entrepreneurs, Laurie was ready, willing, and able to throw his hat into the ring. Over the years, Laurie has become one of our best teachers, coaches, and consultants of our core technology: Situational Leadership® II.

Recognizing that there is no best leadership style—it all depends on the situation—we have been teaching managers all over the world to be situational leaders in working one-on-one with their people as well as in leading people in teams.

Susan Fowler was already an accomplished trainer when she attended a Situational Leadership II seminar being taught by Laurie Hawkins. She grew excited about how situational leadership can not only be applied to the one-on-one and team contexts, but also to self leadership. She felt that this framework held the answer to helping people take the lead when they didn't have the power—when someone else was their manager. Susan got Laurie excited about Situational

Self Leadership and he, in turn, introduced me to Susan. The rest is history. With Susan's lead, Situational Self Leadership has become one of our three core leadership technologies and an invaluable aid to helping people find the *power* in empowerment.

With *Self Leadership and the One Minute Manager*, William Morrow has completed publication of our leadership trilogy, which started with *Leadership and the One Minute Manager* and *The One Minute Builds High Performing Teams*.

The parable you are about to read tells the story of a rising ad executive by the name of Steve, who becomes immobilized by his new responsibilities. Sitting in a café writing his resignation letter, Steve meets Cayla, the essence of Situational Self Leadership. Using magic to underscore her points, Cayla teaches Steve the three tricks of self leadership.

Enjoy the story. I think you'll root for Steve as he makes the journey to self-mastery. More important, learn the three tricks of self leadership, because they will help you and everyone you work with. Take charge of your life at work, at home, and in your community.

My biggest fear is that you will read the story and think the revelations apply to someone else. Sure, it's Steve's story. But isn't it yours, too?

—Ken Blanchard



*Do You Believe in Magic?*

“Before I present you with the television commercials, print ads, and radio scripts that we have prepared for you, let me explain the underlying thinking that went into your advertising campaign.”

After months of work, this was the moment Steve had been working so hard for—his first campaign proposal. And he was scared to death.

Steve distributed the spiral-bound proposal to the eleven vice presidents, and then handed one to Roger, the President of United Bank. The ten men and two women sitting in the semicircle in front of him were his clients, and they would decide if his advertising campaign was acceptable for the upcoming year.

Steve directed them to the budget section of the proposal, forwarding his PowerPoint slides to support his presentation. He detailed the percentages of the budget allocated to the creative design, production expenses, and media buys. He outlined the media recommendations and the rationale behind each one.

No one asked any questions, and Steve sensed they were just waiting to see the creative approach. The energy in the room seemed to shift as he pulled several large foam-core posters from his oversized presentation case and declared, “Since there seem to be no questions regarding the budget, let me move on to the creative approach we’re recommending for television, print, radio, and direct mail.”

Steve held up the storyboards depicting important frames from the television commercials and the hand-drawn layouts for the print ads. He projected the accompanying scripts and ad copy onto the screen.

After reading the radio scripts aloud, Steve sat down, took a deep breath, and waited to hear what they thought. There was an awkward pause until one of the VPs said, “You took a much lighter approach than I thought you would, but maybe that’s good—it projects a friendly bank.”

Another VP spoke up. “You’ve obviously put a lot of time and effort into this campaign.”

After another awkward silence, all heads turned to the center of the semicircle as Roger announced, “This is garbage.”

Everyone was stunned. No one looked at Steve, who went blank. He didn’t know how to respond. He nodded his head up and down as though he were trying to shake out a thought. Realizing he had to say something, he mindlessly began gathering the boards.

“I guess we’ve missed the mark,” he said. “I’ll go back and talk to the creative team. I’ll be back in touch next week.”

Steve didn’t remember how he got to his car. He found himself driving—but not back to the agency. There was no way he could face his creative team. Thank heaven his boss, Rhonda, was out of town. He needed to find a place where he could be alone and think. He also needed a good cup of coffee. Driving through an unfamiliar neighborhood, he happened upon a place called Cayla’s Café. He went in, hoping to find relief.

He gazed around the bookstore café with its solid wood tables and matching heavy wood chairs. It was a very different place from the high-tech chrome and high energy of the ad agency. He found solace in the cave-like coolness, and at the same time was warmed by the smell of coffee mingled with newsprint. He liked being surrounded by shelves piled high with books and magazines, and hoped they could ease the dilemma nagging at him. He knew he had to face the facts. What had gone wrong? How did things get so far off track?

Steve ordered a café mocha and let the warmth of the mug seep into his palms before taking the first sip. After this latest fiasco, he was sure to be fired. Frankly, as he thought about it, he was surprised he had gotten this far.

Three years ago Steve felt as though he'd won the lottery. Rhonda, cofounder of the Creative Advertising Agency, had hired him straight out of college with a degree in marketing. He'd taken an entry-level position and quickly worked his way to lead production manager in charge of several large accounts. Last year he'd served as coproducer of the industry's awards program for outstanding ad campaigns.



Four months ago, Steve felt flattered when Rhonda gave him the opportunity to bypass the typical career path as a junior account exec on a larger account and take the account exec role on a small but well-regarded account—United Bank. Rhonda told Steve that she wanted to empower him, and that this was the perfect time to do so.

Steve saw his promotion as his chance to prove himself. If he could make a mark with United Bank, he could soon take on the more prestigious, big-budget accounts.

Or so he had thought. Now his confidence was shattered and his future in question. The meeting had unnerved him. The more he thought about the bank president's reaction, the angrier he got.

In a blinding flash of the obvious, Steve realized the real source of his failure—it was Rhonda. She'd abandoned him. Where was she when he needed her—when everything was falling apart? Why hadn't she warned him that the client was a nightmare, that the copywriter on his team was a whiner, and that the art director was an egomaniac? Rhonda was the one person who could have saved him from this humiliation, but instead, she'd "empowered" him. He had trusted her and she'd fed him to the wolves.

Now that he had proved to be a failure, Steve was sure Rhonda would fire him. He decided to beat her to the punch. She wouldn't fire him—he'd quit! He pulled out a yellow legal pad and pen to begin drafting his resignation letter.

He was just writing the first sentence when his attention was drawn to a group of young children trying to muffle their laughter as they gathered under a rustic sign claiming the area as Cayla's Magic Corner. He watched as a small, intense, black woman moved in front of the children and sat down on a simple wooden stool facing them. She rested her forearms on her thighs and leaned close to them. Not saying a word, she slowly gazed at each child with direct eye contact. Steve could have heard a pin drop.

"I am Cayla," she said softly and very slowly, enunciating each word as though revealing a great mystery. "And I am a magician."

She told them about an old Indian mystic who taught her the art of mind over matter. To demonstrate, she pulled out two rubber bands, entwined them together, and pulled and tugged to show that they could not be easily separated.

Milking the tale for all it was worth, Cayla claimed she could separate the two bands using only the power of her mind—and then she did so. The children roared their approval. It was truly magical.

Steve regained his focus and went back to writing his resignation letter, losing track of time.

“Did you enjoy the magic?”

The voice jolted him out of his deep concentration. Steve looked up and saw Cayla standing beside him. He rose awkwardly and held out his hand.

“Sorry, I hope you didn’t mind—it was fun to watch you. You’re a good magician. My name is Steve.”

“Mind? Not at all,” the woman said as she returned the handshake. “I was hoping you’d join in. My name is Cayla.”

“That’s your real name?”

Cayla smiled. “Yes, it really is. My parents loved the name because it means ‘empowered’ in Hebrew. Maybe that’s where I get my magical powers,” she said with a laugh.

Steve gave her a wistful smile. “I remember when I believed in magic. I also remember how disappointed I was when I realized there was no such thing as magic. But don’t get me wrong—I still appreciate the skill behind the tricks.”

“You don’t believe in magic,” she said with a sigh. “Too bad, because it looks as though you could use some.”

Steve was too startled to reply. He'd had no idea he was that transparent. Cayla pulled a chair over from the adjacent table and sat down, motioning for Steve to sit as well.

"Listen," she said, gazing at Steve with the same intense eye contact she'd given the children earlier. "You are obviously a businessman, yet here you are in this bookstore at midday. You've barely touched your coffee and scone. Something is bothering you."

Encouraged by her compassionate smile, Steve told Cayla his sad story, beginning with his excitement and pride at being given his own client after less than three years with the company.

"But it wasn't long before my dream turned into a nightmare," he explained. "Even in the initial client meetings we struggled to establish an advertising budget. I had developed media and production budgets in the past, but I couldn't tell the client what was appropriate for them. Nothing in those early meetings confirmed their good first impression of me or the agency—and it went downhill from there.

"There was no budget, no goals, and no strategy. I didn't know how to direct my creative team without an agreed-upon advertising strategy. The client drove me crazy—no one could agree on anything!"

Cayla nodded thoughtfully as she listened to Steve pour out his side of the failed client relationship. “What about your creative team? Did they help?” she asked.

“Oh, they’re another story. Creative people are worse than spoiled children. I tried to give them direction, but it was like herding cats. When they asked for more specifics, I tried to explain that the client couldn’t agree on a strategy. But it all fell on deaf ears. They just told me that it was my job to figure out what the client wants, even if the client isn’t sure! How am I supposed to do that? Finally, I demanded they come up with something—anything—that I could show the client. So they did.”

“I’m afraid to ask . . .” Cayla’s statement trailed into silence.

“That’s why I’m here. It was a fiasco. The client hated it. Heck, I hated it. I knew it was no good, but it was all I had.” Steve was holding his head in his hands as though the burden was too much to contemplate. “I’m sick to death of the whole creative process. I’m not creative, so I have to depend on my team, and they’re totally undependable! It puts me in a no-win situation. How am I supposed to manage the creative process when I’m not creative?”

Cayla pressed on. “So what do you do now?”

“I’m writing my resignation letter,” Steve said matter-of-factly.

“Hmm,” Cayla said thoughtfully. “Quitting?”

“Yeah, before I get fired,” Steve responded.

“Why don’t you go to your boss for help?” Cayla asked.

“It’s too late. What can Rhonda do now? We’re probably going to lose the client—and she’ll blame me, even though it’s not my fault.”

“Whose fault is it?” Cayla asked.

Steve shook his head, feeling even more betrayed by Rhonda. “Isn’t it obvious? When Rhonda abandoned me, it all fell apart. Now I’ve even lost confidence in the things I used to do well, like budgets, media, and production. I didn’t realize advertising is such a dog-eat-dog world. It’s not like I thought it would be,” Steve lamented.

“Just like the magic,” Cayla interjected. “You loved magic when you were naïve and could suspend your disbelief. But now you are disillusioned by it, because you realize there’s a trick behind the magic.”

“I’m not sure there’s any trick behind succeeding in this business. If there is, no one has bothered to show me,” Steve said defiantly.

“If you don’t mind me saying so, it sounds as though you’re full of excuses—a poor victim of circumstance.”

Cayla's comment struck Steve as harsh and he replied defensively. "What do you mean, 'a victim of circumstance'?"

"I mean a person who refuses to take responsibility for the situation he's in. It's easier to blame everyone else around you, rather than taking responsibility for yourself," Cayla replied without apology.

"Hold on. You can't blame me for what's happened. Rhonda's expectations were unfair. I didn't get the support I needed from her or from the creative team—I could go on and on," Steve asserted.

"So," continued Cayla, "Rhonda should have known better than to delegate the account to you and give you the freedom to do your job, right?"

Steve was a little annoyed—and surprised—at the turn the conversation had taken. Yet in his heart he knew there was some truth to what she was saying.

Cayla's eyes filled with empathy and in a soothing voice she said, "Right now you're feeling confused and unsure. You sense there's some truth in what I'm saying, but buying into it would mean that *you* must be the responsible one—not Rhonda, your client, or your temperamental creative team. Somehow that doesn't feel fair. You're even feeling a little scared."

Steve stared at Cayla, wondering how this woman could know all that. It was as though she could read his mind.

“Let me explain,” Cayla offered before Steve could ask. “I can’t read your mind. As a magician, I’m a master of observation, although right now you’re not all that hard to read.”

Cayla paused thoughtfully and looked straight into his eyes. “Steve,” she said, “years ago I was in a boat very similar to the one you’re sinking in. Fortunately for me, I met a wonderful guy known as the One Minute Manager. What he taught me created such a miraculous change in my life that I call it magic. I’d like to pass that magic on to you.”

“Magic?” Steve asked incredulously. “I think I need more than smoke and mirrors to deal with this mess!”

“It isn’t in smoke and mirrors,” Cayla said flatly. “The magic comes from self leadership.”

Steve was quick to reply. “Leadership might work for the One Minute Manager, but I’m not a manager—let alone a famous one. I’m a lowly account executive with a manager who doesn’t support me—not when it counts.”



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