Taking People with You
The Only Way to Make BIG Things Happen

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

David Novak learned long ago that you can’t lead a great organization of any size without getting your people aligned, enthusiastic and focused relentlessly on the mission. But how do you do that? There are countless leadership books, but how many will actually help a Taco Bell shift manager, a Fortune 500 CEO, a new entrepreneur or anyone in between?

During his 15 years at Yum! Brands, Novak developed a trademarked program he calls Taking People with You. He spends several weeks each year personally teaching it to thousands of managers around the world. He convinces them that they’ll never make big things happen until they learn how to get people on their side. No skill in business is more important. And Yum!’s extraordinary success (at least 13 percent growth for each of the last nine years) proves his point.

Novak knows that managers don’t need leadership platitudes or business school theories. In Taking People with You, he cuts right to the chase with a step-by-step guide to setting big goals, getting people to work together, blowing past your targets and celebrating after you shock the skeptics. And then doing it again and again until consistent excellence becomes a core element of your culture.

In this book, Novak offers specific tools that will challenge you to reflect on how you’re really doing on key aspects of leadership.

Get ready to change the way you think about leadership and, more important, the way you practice it every day.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

• How to get inside the heads of your people.
• How to think big.
• How to practice “extraordinary authenticity.”
• How to look for good ideas in unexpected places.
• How to choose a can-do mindset.
• Why you should cheer for first downs, not just touchdowns.
Introduction

We all need people to help us along the way. You can go only so far by going it alone. If you want to start a business, if you want a big promotion, if you are developing or launching a new product, if you want your company to move in a new direction, if you want to expand your sales territory, if you want to raise money for a good cause, even if you become the coach of your child’s soccer team, which has lost every game so far, and you want to show those kids what it feels like to win, you’re going to need people to help you get there. You’ll never accomplish anything big if you try to do it alone.

Early in my career, I had an experience that changed how I thought about my own role as a leader and inspired me to accomplish what, for me, is my greatest example of taking people with you. I was working for PepsiCo at the time, making my way up through the ranks, and had recently become head of operations for Pepsi Bottling.

I was at a plant in St. Louis, conducting a 6 a.m. roundtable meeting with a group of route salesmen, when, over coffee and doughnuts, I asked what I thought was a pretty straightforward question about merchandising, which is all about the displays and visibility we get in convenience and grocery stores. I wanted to know what they thought was working and what wasn’t. Right away, someone piped up, “Bob is the expert in that area. He can tell you how it’s done.” Someone else added, “Bob taught me more in one day than I’d learned in two years on the job.” Every single person in the room agreed: Bob was the best there was. I looked over at Bob, thinking he must be thrilled by all this praise. Instead, I saw that he had tears running down his face. When I asked him what was wrong, Bob, who had been with the company for more than 40 years and was about to retire in just two weeks, said, “I never knew anyone felt this way about me.”

The rest of my visit to the plant went pretty well, but I walked away that day with an uneasy feeling. It was such a shame that Bob had never felt appreciated. It was a missed opportunity for the business, too. We all could have benefited from his expertise and more people could have learned from him. This guy was clearly great at what he did, but who knows how much better he could have been in a workplace that recognized and rewarded his knowledge. I knew that if he felt overlooked and underappreciated, others at the plant did too.

Make It Happen

I’ve always believed in people, but that experience made me even more determined to be the kind of leader who would never let a person like Bob go through his entire career without being thanked for what he did and encouraged to find out how much more he could do. I wanted the people who worked for me to know that they mattered and I wanted them to enjoy coming to work every day. I also understood that none of this would happen unless I made it happen. It was my job to cast the right shadow of leadership because no one else was going to live up to these principles unless I lived up to them first.

I am now chairman and CEO of Yum! Brands, the world’s largest restaurant company and owner of the brands KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell. When I started in this position more than a decade ago, I thought of the Bobs of the world and made it one of my first priorities.
to create a recognition culture in which everyone counted and to do it so successfully that our company would become renowned for it. That was no small task, considering we now have more than 1.4 million employees spread out over 117 countries. But while we’re far from perfect, it’s working. I know it’s working, because I get proof of it almost every day.

**An Insight-Driven Approach to Leading People and Achieving Big Goals**

You have to begin by asking yourself three big questions that will drive your approach to leadership and allow you to take people with you. They are:

1. **What’s the single biggest thing you can imagine that will grow your business or change your life?**
2. **Who do you need to affect, influence or take with you to be successful?**
3. **What perceptions, habits or beliefs of this target audience do you need to build, change or reinforce to reach your goal?**

Before I ask you to answer these questions, I need to explain the right way to approach them. When Roger Enrico, who was chairman of PepsiCo at the time, first asked me to develop a program on leadership, the request forced me to take a look in the mirror and ask myself what was my key to taking people with me. How, exactly, was I able to get people on the same page and marching toward a goal? I concluded that the core of my leadership success stems from my ability to think like a marketer.

In marketing, if you can get inside the minds of your customers, you have the opportunity to solve their problems for them in a way that can improve your business. You need to have a good understanding of what they’re thinking and why they’re thinking that way. In order to get people to buy your product, for example, you have to start by gaining insight into what will convince them that they can’t or shouldn’t live without it. To be a successful leader, one who gets big things done, you need to have the same kind of insight into the minds of those you lead.

**Be Relevant**

You don’t just talk about what you’re offering people; you make sure your brand or product is positioned in a way that is relevant to whomever you’re trying to influence. This kind of insight-driven thinking works in all kinds of situations. Snickers achieved dramatic growth when it tapped into the consumer mindset that candy bars are not good for you and started touting their brand as “The Snack that Satisfies.” Swatch did something similar when, instead of positioning themselves as simply another watch brand, they realized that consumers wanted to use their watches as clothing accessories. Swatch started offering a wide variety of watchbands, and soon their products became a fashion statement. And you may remember how Oldsmobile successfully countered its stodgy image by talking about its new model as “Not your father’s Oldsmobile.” You get the idea. Knowing how people are thinking gives you the insight you need to reframe your product in a way that gets people on your side.

**PART ONE: GET YOUR MINDSET RIGHT**

**Be Your Best Self: Be Yourself, Know Yourself, Grow Yourself**

People know and follow the real deal when they see it, those who walk through life on their own terms, who stay true to their beliefs and who don’t back down. We can all name people like this, and there’s often a pretty broad consensus that such diverse figures as Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Oprah Winfrey, Muhammad Ali and Winston Churchill are (or were) all real deals, which goes to show that authenticity can be demonstrated in many different styles.

I call this having “extraordinary authenticity,” which means having the ability to be yourself even in the toughest situations. This requires living with a paradox: To inspire as a leader, you need to know your stuff, but you also need to be able to admit when you don’t know stuff. You need to be both confident and vulnerable at the same time.

Allowing yourself to be vulnerable can be hard enough for most of us, but in the business world, the idea of being yourself is further complicated by the fact that it’s also important to get along with all sorts of people while staying true to yourself. You obviously can’t just say to colleagues or customers, “This is me being myself, take it or leave it.” Not if you want to get ahead. Instead, you have to figure out how to be you in a way that broadens your appeal and impact versus turning people off or unnecessarily clashing with company culture.
Be an Avid Learner: Seek and Build Know-How

One of the most effective things you can do to continue to grow and be your best self is to always be learning. In fact, I believe that being an avid learner is the single biggest thing that separates a good leader from a great one. Someone with a voracious appetite for knowledge is bound to inspire others with their passion and curiosity and can energize an organization by bringing to it new ideas.

I will take good ideas wherever I can find them. In fact, some of the biggest successes of my career have been the result of building on the ideas of others, and I’m not too proud to admit that some of those ideas came directly from competitors. For example, when I went to Pizza Hut to run marketing in 1986, sales were down and the brand hadn’t had any successful new products in years.

One of the emerging concepts in the industry back then was specialty pizzas, and one of the places that was doing that better than anyone else was California Pizza Kitchen (CPK). They excelled at using known flavor combinations to make unique specialty pizzas, like barbecue chicken pizza, Thai chicken pizza and BLT pizza.

So one day I took my team to Los Angeles and we went to CPK for lunch. We ordered practically every specialty pizza on the menu and really enjoyed them. It was clear they were on to something, but we weren’t CPK. Could we make this concept work at Pizza Hut without losing what makes Pizza Hut unique?

At first, we tried a Cajun pizza, but that didn’t really hit a home run with our customers. They wanted new menu options, but they didn’t really want strange new flavor combinations. Next, we decided on a specialty pizza that gave our customers more of what they already loved. First, was a Meat Lover’s Pizza, which was such a hit that it led to our Cheese Lover’s Pizza and then to a whole new “Lover’s” line that has become a phenomenal success. Our Pepperoni Lover’s Pizza, which is just a regular pizza with an extra helping of pepperoni on top, was one of the most successful new products in Pizza Hut history.

This kind of pattern thinking, where you look at what’s working for someone else and apply it to your own situation, is one of the best ways to make big things happen for you and your team.

Unleash the Power of People

I believe leadership is a privilege. I also believe deep down in my bones that all people, when given a choice, have an inherent desire to do the right thing, to contribute and to make a positive difference through the work that they do. And I’m absolutely convinced that it’s crucial to have this mindset in order to get the most out of the people you work with. As a matter of fact, I believe that there is potential in every person and, as the leader, it’s my job to unleash it.

Establishing Trust with Your Team

If you can establish an environment where every single person feels that he or she is part of a team and has a chance to contribute, you’ve created a situation where people can do great things. To build an environment like this, you have to start with trust.

Reaching out to people and building relationships based on trust might seem like a natural idea, but how do you do it? This is not the sort of thing they typically teach in business school. Below are things you can do to show people that you believe in them and that you care.

1. Know that people want to contribute: Start with the right attitude: Realize that 99.9 percent of people come to work every day wanting to do good and try hard. So you have to go to work every day thinking about your people that way and appreciating them for it, not looking to catch the 0.1 percent who want to mess things up or don’t act in good faith.

2. Demonstrate that everyone counts: It’s been shown that the most successful companies have a culture where every person feels valued. No matter what their position, they all know they have a chance to contribute and make a difference.

3. The more they know, the more they care: One way to show people you trust in their abilities and intentions is to share what you know.
4. **Ask questions that promote insight:** To find out more about who people are and what they think, one of my favorite questions to ask is, “What would you do if you had my job?”

5. **Take Responsive Action:** Once you’ve found out what people think, you’ve got to act on that and show that you’ve taken them into account.

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**You Have to Believe It Can Be Done**

Think for a moment about what you want to accomplish and ask yourself: Do you truly believe you can make it happen?

If the answer to that question is not an immediate and emphatic *yes*, then you have some work to do.

**Seeing Success**

I wanted to really understand how a person has to think in order to win in any competitive arena, so after touring restaurants in Williamsburg, Va., I stopped in to see Bob Rotella at his house. Bob, one of the world’s leading sports psychologists and an expert on peak performance, really drove this point home: “If you think of yourself as able to do something, you probably will do it. If you think of yourself as incapable, you probably won’t.” But believing that you can succeed is not the same thing as knowing exactly how you’re going to get there. It means having faith that you and your people will find a way. If you don’t already have the knowledge, you can find it. If you don’t already have the resources, you can get them. It means believing that you and your team have the capacity to figure things out. And if you don’t believe that, you need to spend some time thinking about why you don’t. By fully examining why not, you’ll identify barriers to your goal.

**Strategy: Tell It Like It Is ... and How It Could Be**

My mentor, Andy Pearson, was a master at establishing truth in his business. When he was chairman of our company, there was something he used to say over and over again, like a motto: “See the world the way it really is, not how you wish it to be.”

Telling it like it is means more than just presenting the facts; it means showing what they mean — and what they could mean for the future — for your business or for any task you’re working on.

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**Strategy: Create a Vision and Personalize It**

Once you’ve defined reality for the people you lead, the next step is to develop a shared vision for where you want to go next. After a meeting with his team during which he had laid out an inspiring view of their future, a KFC franchisee from Tennessee, Charlie Middleton, said to me in his deep baritone, Deputy Dog-like voice, “A road to nowhere is hard to build.” What he meant was that it’s a lot easier to get somewhere if you know where you’re headed. I couldn’t agree more. When constructing a plan to achieve your goal, it’s essential that you have a clear idea of the end point first, before you start drawing a road map for how to get there.

What do I mean by a vision? It’s your idea of what the future will look like when you achieve your Big Goal, what the benefits are, what the outcome or results will be. If you can create a vision for what you want to get done and make it feel relevant to the people you lead, then you’re going to be well on your way.

When creating a vision, think about your target audience, the people you have to take with you. You have to create a vision that the people you lead can look at and say:

1. I understand it.
2. I know that my customers, or the people we need to win over, will like it.
3. I can get excited about it.
4. I can make it happen.

For example, in 1998, after our spinoff from PepsiCo, I wanted to talk about my vision for where I saw us headed as a new company. When I thought about it (with the help and input of my team, of course), the success of our restaurant brands boiled down to one thing: making people happy. Good food makes people happy. If we can give them a great customer experience...
on top of that, they’ll be even happier. If we give them value for their money so they can keep a bit more in their pockets, well, that makes people happy too. So the vision we came up with was to “Put a YUM on people’s faces around the world.”

The vision I set forth satisfied each of the four points above and all of us, from our restaurant workers to our lawyers, could get behind the idea.

Strategy: Gain Alignment Every Step of the Way at Every Level

Once you’ve shared the business realities and your vision with your team, the third part of executing your strategy is to gain alignment. Alignment is hugely important. You can have the best idea in the world, but it won’t matter if you can’t get people onboard to help you make it happen. If you can’t get alignment, your great idea is not an effective idea.

During the past 20 years, I’ve had the benefit of learning from a number of top-ranked change consultants. What they all have to say about alignment basically boils down to this: You have to make sure people understand three things.

1. What do you want them to do?
2. What’s in it for them?
3. Are you going to do it too?

People will get on board with your goal when they understand it, they know what they’ll get out of it and when they know that you are as invested in it as they are. Only then will they truly feel accountable for doing their part to make it happen.

Structure: Resources, Organization and Process Enable Execution

It’s one thing to say you want to do something; it’s another thing to get it done. Once you have your strategy for your Big Goal, you have to put structure in place to make it happen. That means having the resources, organization and process you need to execute your strategy. These things together provide a solid framework that drives accountability.

For example, a number of years ago, we wanted to expand our lunch business at Pizza Hut. Customers loved coming into our restaurants for dinner, but they didn’t see us as a viable lunch option for three basic reasons: Our pizzas were too big, too expensive and took too long to make. It was the opposite of the quick, easy and affordable fare that most people were looking for when on their lunch hour from work.

To solve these perception problems, we put a dedicated team on a mission to develop the lunch daypart. The first thing the team decided was to launch a 6-inch Personal Pan Pizza at a low price point. That solved two out of the three issues, but then we had to figure out how to ensure that our restaurants would be quick enough for the lunch crowd. So we put a process in place to make sure that customers could eat their lunch and still make it back to work on time. We offered a “five-minute guarantee” and put an hourglass on each table to mark the time. If the wait staff didn’t get customers their pizzas before that hourglass ran out, they had to give them a coupon for their next pizza free. Our franchisees, even those who weren’t thrilled in the beginning at having to implement a new process in the restaurants, were won over by the results. The promotion was wildly popular with customers and we doubled our lunch business.

Culture: Make ‘Winning Together’ a Big Idea

The final part of your plan is your culture. This is a critical ingredient that many leaders forget to consider. Or they just ignore it. But having the right culture, one that breeds positive energy and success, is crucial not just to the success of your current goal, but to anything you and your team want to accomplish going forward. A great culture is what will allow you to get those hard results and get them consistently.

What is culture? What I’m really talking about here is the work environment. As a leader, what sort of values are you projecting? What kind of atmosphere do you create for your team? Is it one in which people are excited to go to work every day, feel supported and appreciated and know they can grow? There is a big difference between people working toward a goal because they are getting paid to do it versus working together toward a goal because it is a rewarding experience. That difference shows up in the hard results that we all care about.

At Yum! we have come up with a list of How We Win Togetherness principles, which are the foundation of our culture. Such principles should always meet certain criteria:

1. Are they relevant to your business?
2. Do they help make people feel as though they count?
3. Do they make your people happy to be working where they are, enough so that
they’ll ask themselves, Why would I want to work anywhere else?

4. Do they inspire your people to satisfy the customer and achieve results?

PART THREE: FOLLOW THROUGH TO GET RESULTS

Market the Change: Be a Bold Ad for Your Big Goal

What makes a good ad good and a bad ad bad? This is something that people in marketing think about all the time, but really, in this day and age, we are exposed to so many advertisements over the course of our lives, we all have a pretty good idea of which ones we like, which ones we don’t and why.

Good ads are emotional and memorable. They are relatable and address a need in those they target. They also drive their audience to action, to go out and buy that product. You want to see a good ad again and again.

Bad ads are forgettable. They feel irrelevant or out of touch with their target audience. They don’t make clear what they’re selling. Sometimes they’re even so annoying that they make you want to do the opposite of what they want you to do. You never want to see a bad ad again.

As a leader, do you want to be a good ad or a bad ad?

KFC’s founder, Colonel Sanders, understood the importance of being a good ad for his goal. As his chicken became more popular, he and his wife, Claudia, would travel around to different towns and put on Kentucky Fried Chicken demonstrations in local restaurants. But they didn’t rely just on the Colonel’s tasty chicken recipe to make a good impression. Claudia greeted customers in an antebellum-style dress. And whenever he had the chance, the Colonel himself would come out from the kitchen in his distinctive white suit, which became his trademark, to do “a little coloneling.”

You need to market your goal or your initiative in the same dynamic way you would a new product. You need to keep that goal front and center in the minds of your target audience. That means you need to get their attention, convince them of its importance and keep convincing them.

Use Recognition to Drive Performance

If you’re doing a good job of measuring your progress and the benchmarks of success are clear, then everyone knows when progress is made, and that gives you the opportunity to celebrate your accomplishments along the way. Celebrations are essential. They are shared experiences that keep people motivated and invested in achieving the ultimate goal.

Years ago, I was watching an AFC championship game between the Cleveland Browns and the Denver Broncos. It was an incredibly cold day made worse by wind and snow, a really difficult atmosphere in which to keep one’s spirits up. With just five minutes left on the clock and the Broncos behind by a touchdown, they got the ball on their own 2-yard line. It looked as though they were sure to lose. But then the team, led by Hall of Fame quarterback John Elway, started moving the ball steadily across the field, play by play, first down after first down. They got nine first downs in all before finally scoring a touchdown with just 37 seconds left in regulation play. It was an incredible 98-yard drive to tie the Goal, but its just as important that you don’t do it until you’ve listened to everyone’s concerns and considered all the potential barriers to success.

The thing you don’t want to do when someone expresses doubts is to plow ahead as if it never happened. But sometimes we do this without even realizing it because we’re so sure of ourselves, so sure that we have a good idea. The following is a checklist of what you should do to make sure you really are seeing all sides and considering all valid opinions and objections:

1. **Listen and understand why:** Take each concern seriously and get to the bottom of it.

2. **Incorporate valid objections into your plans:** If you decide that the objections have merit, then it’s time to adjust your plan. Doing this may take a bit more time and effort, but the result will be better for it.

3. **Listen, then lead:** After you’ve heard and considered all the different viewpoints, you can’t get paralyzed with indecision. It’s up to you, as the leader, to make a decision about what to do next.

4. **Do the right thing and the right thing will happen:** Follow your instincts. If you know you’ve done right by your team, listening to their concerns and doing your homework on your initiative, then have confidence in your decision.

Understand and Overcome the Barriers to Success

I still believe it’s important to have the courage to move forward with intentionality to achieve your Big
score and Denver went on to win the game in overtime. It was an amazing thing to watch, but what caught my attention the most was the way the whole team celebrated each and every one of those first downs. The guys on the sidelines were clapping and cheering the whole way down the field. Research has shown just how important this is too. A recent study of soccer players, for example, found that the team that celebrated goals with the most enthusiasm typically won the game. It’s a great lesson for any leader: Don’t wait for the win or until you cross the finish line.

The Change Is Never Over

This idea of your work never being over is true for your goal, and it’s true for your business overall. As one of my board members, Massimo Ferragamo, said to me once, “If someone says that the changes are over, they are over. I personally believe that every arrival point is a departing point, and you have to always think that way.”

Massimo’s business is a family business, started by his father, so he’s been in a unique position to witness just how true this is over the long term. When he started working in the United States, trying to make his Italian shoe brand popular in a new market, there was really just one major competitor in the ladies’ shoe market and one in the men’s shoe market. So his team studied every detail of those competitors, from pricing to positioning to incentives given to salespeople. He says, “We went after [those competitors] like they were our target. And the success story was that we beat them both by looking at exactly what they were doing and trying to do it a little bit better.”

Massimo remembers it as a continual process of improvement to reach that goal, and they never stopped wondering how they could get another extra edge. But now other companies are targeting his and trying to evolve in the same way that it did. Less than a decade ago, no one was selling as many shoes in the United States as Ferragamo, but now the competition has just ballooned. “From being a company that was the leader out of maybe 10 brands, today we have big fights to keep our position out of 70 or 80 brands. So the landscape has changed completely, and we are back in a position that we have to think the same way we were thinking 20 years ago and getting back that No.1 spot.”

Afterword

I truly believe that taking people with you is the job of every leader; it’s not something that can be delegated. If you’re one person getting big things done, that’s pretty good, but it will take you only so far. If you can help a whole team or organization full of people to reach big goals, then there’s no telling what you can accomplish together. It’s up to you as a leader to make that happen.

As I close, I’m reminded of something I witnessed recently. It was a Saturday and I was reading the paper outside by the pool at my hotel. I looked up and saw a woman stick her toe in the cool water and then very gradually, almost painfully, lower herself in, barely making a current in the pool. Meanwhile, a young kid ran past her and jumped in, cannonball-style. He made a huge splash that got everyone’s attention and resulted in ripples that went from one side of the pool to the other.

You have a choice: You can take the lessons you’ve learned here and dabble with them and probably not make much difference in your life or in others’; or you can jump in with abandon, put these lessons to work and create ripples that will help you and those around you achieve all that you’re capable of. I hope you’ll choose to be a ripple maker and receive all the joy and results that go with it.

Focus On Your Big Goal

To drive the change you want, keep your Big Goal front and center in your own mind and in the minds of your target audience. Three ways to keep the focus are:

- **Persistence, persistence, persistence.** It’s your job to figure out how to keep the focus on what really matters and not get sidetracked.
- **Relentless communication.** Help keep the focus on your goal by never stopping communication with your people.
- **Play as though you’re behind.** You should be going to work every day believing that you’ll succeed, but playing as though you’re behind in the score. That’s the attitude that will give you the best chance at success.

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked Taking People with You, you’ll also like:

1. **The Education of an Accidental CEO** by David Novak. Learn how to get everyone from division presidents to dishwashers to buy into recognizing the achievements of others.
2. **Drive** by Daniel H. Pink. Pink exposes the mismatch between what science knows and what business does — and how that affects every aspect of life.