

WHOLE LEADERS IN CORPORATE SECURITY & LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ten Whole Leader Development Strategies



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Until security and law enforcement are done by robots, reform will always be about human beings. A reformation is different from a revolution. A reformation is a process of reforming something into a better thing based on what is already working and what we already know but may not practice. Therefore, any approach to helping law enforcement officers or leaders become better versions of themselves must be built on those fundamental realities. Security and law enforcement reform is not a revolution, but taking what we already know to be true and what is working well, and paying close attention to that which must be changed.

LEADERS IN SECURITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ARE HUMAN BEINGS AND MUST BE TREATED AS SUCH. THEY BRING ALL THE BROKENNESS AND BEAUTY THAT THE REST OF US CARRY, BUT WITH A VASTLY DIFFERENT LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR NAVIGATING HUMAN INTERACTIONS.



This is where nearly four decades of research on the development of leaders has direct implications for how we invest in those who will keep us safe in the future. To the extent that leading is defined by going first and being responsible for others, it's clear that we must treat these leaders not only as humans, but as leaders in our communities and corporations. Leaders are not only those who are responsible for going first with conviction, clarity, and instruction, but also for being the first to listen, to care, and see us amid our chaos, deepest falls, and genuine humanity.

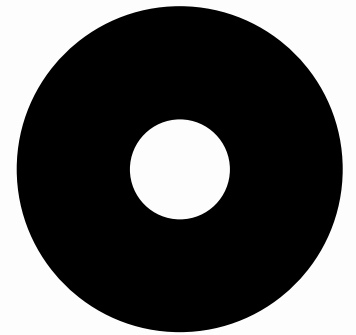
IF WE SAW LEADERS IN SECURITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AS HUMAN BEINGS MORE LIKE US THAN NOT, HOW WOULD WE PREPARE THEM FOR THE CHALLENGING ROAD AHEAD?

As professionals committed to the whole and intentional development of leaders, that challenge is at the front of our minds. At a time in history when we have little tolerance for failure in leaders and quickly villainize our heroes, leaders in law enforcement and security must bring a level of fortitude that is unparalleled. Brokenness exists in the system, and reform is undoubtedly necessary, but what kind of reform are we talking about?

We are justified in asking security and law enforcement leaders to be compassionate, empathic, caring, and just to every one of their constituents and to pay attention to those constituents they may have a visible or invisible bias toward. But, we must also be in touch with the reality that a compassionate leader is a leader with a high level of self-regard, conviction, and clarity. Entering the most volatile of human interactions requires a leader who is clear, thinking quickly, adapting, caring, and decisive. This is the reality of every leader with a heart for those they serve.

There is no place where that reality is more necessary than for a leader in security and law enforcement. And, developing their capacity as whole human beings with that responsibility will require us to provide a structure that invites their whole life experience, nuance, challenging conversations in a supportive environment, builds their resilience, and inspires them to realize their inherent value.

Developing them as whole leaders requires an intentional integration of the training that already exists with developmental opportunities necessary for every leader in every context. A whole leader reformation in security and law enforcement is the purposeful integration of the best thinking in hard skill training with the best thinking in the harder skill training. While often referred to as “soft skills,” developing a human being as a leader is the most challenging part. Claiming otherwise is a disservice to just how hard it is to be a leader of other people. Whole leader development in security and law enforcement is the intentional integration of tactical training for high-pressure situations with the best psychological principles in leader development from the last several decades. They must be integrated because the reality is that our tactical responses (the real actions we take in different situations) are impacted by our purpose, our competence, our support, our experiences, our motivations, and vice versa. In other words, our psychology is influencing our behavior, and our behavior is impacting our psychology.



**SO, IF
WHOLE AND
INTENTIONAL
LEADER
DEVELOPMENT
IS NECESSARY,
WHERE DO WE
BEGIN?**

Following are **ten strategies** for reforming how we think about preparing a leader in corporate or government security, and law enforcement. Whether it's an individual officer or senior leader in a department or agency, our hope is that the following suggestions will inspire new ways of thinking while reinforcing some of the things these leaders may already be doing well.

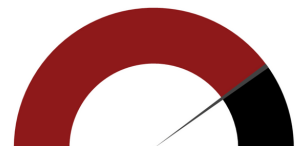
TEN WHOLE LEADER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

COMMIT TO WHOLE LEADER DEVELOPMENT

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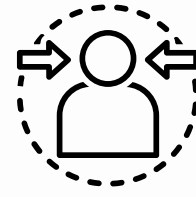
Preparing a whole person for leadership in security and law enforcement begins with a commitment to see these leaders as people with the capacity to move toward more wholeness despite the fragmentation that is a part of their lives.

Decades of research on the preparation of leaders has made it clear that a high-functioning leader is required to practice a complex set of developmental rhythms. This includes a continuing awareness of their purpose, calling, motivations, competence, experiences, support, and the development of other leaders. The psychology and functioning of every leader are more than their personality, strengths, or tactical capacity. Committing to their growth as whole leaders requires us to invite them to examine their strengths and blind spots and provide the necessary scaffolding to make their whole development approachable and accessible. Deep level change for any leader requires that.





START WITH YOURSELF



Not surprisingly, one of the top predictors of success for most leadership development initiatives is senior leader participation. While “buy-in” is the extent to which a leader is behind the leadership development initiatives being launched in their organization, participation is about every leader working through the same process as the rest. When the most senior leaders in any organization, including security and law enforcement, are participating in the process, everything changes. For example, when a law enforcement officer witnesses a senior leader in their sphere taking a closer look at their own developmental challenges with a willingness to share both their strengths and their vulnerabilities, everything starts to change.

While it is ridiculous to assume that senior leader vulnerability is easy to do, it is one of the most important predictors of the success of a whole leader development program.



This is precisely why we expect that the most senior leaders in the organizations we serve are as involved as any leader in their organization. When that happens, it is a fundamental catalyst for what we describe as deep-seated leader preparation.



DOUBLE DOWN ON PURPOSE



In the best whole leader development efforts, purpose precedes action. Purpose is different from mission in that mission is typically the goal or assignment given to us. Purpose is your specific reason for being in that assignment. It is one thing for leaders to be clear about what they are being asked to do; another is to be clear about why they are the person for that job - at both a tactical and a personal level. Security and law enforcement leaders are just as likely to default toward taking quick and immediate action as anyone else. They may default to action even faster because of the absolute necessity for decisive actions in the life and death situations they face so commonly. When it comes to robust and whole leader development, we don't begin with action but with intentionality regarding the purpose behind everything we do.

While leaders understand and relate to the idea that purpose is critical due to its power in calling a person to be in the security and law enforcement profession in the first place, it's an entirely different level to frame purpose as an ongoing driver of leader effectiveness.

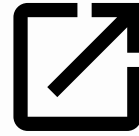
In our study of the most essential strategies allowing a leader to maintain their composure under pressure, purpose was most important. Other strategies matter, but to the extent a leader expressed purpose as a part of their cadence, the leader remained both convicted and connected to their stakeholders. Doubling down on purpose means to think about and document the purpose behind important moments and your role as a leader in those moments. The high-pressure situations will come quickly, so this requires intentionally stepping back and asking yourself, “Why am I a leader in this situation or with these stakeholders?”



According to our research, the level of purposeful intention is as important as any action taken in the next moment.



MODEL TACTICAL VULNERABILITY



Vulnerability is tricky to prescribe because the definition of vulnerability is quite literally “the openness to being hurt.” Asking a leader in security or law enforcement to be vulnerable (either emotionally or physically) is asking them to intentionally make themselves open to being psychologically wounded. While necessary to develop a whole leader, we must always be aware of the tension between openness and safety. Vulnerability is critically important for all of us. It takes a tremendous amount of courage because anything we share beyond the surface is something that others could use against us - at least, that’s what it feels like. That’s why we suggest that leaders practice tactical or strategic vulnerability.

Tactical vulnerability is the intentional process of sharing something beyond what we are comfortable sharing that could open the same level of courage in others - and that is the foundation upon which trust begins to be built.

Tactical vulnerability is still about sharing something that is a little uncomfortable to share or maintaining an open posture (physical or mental) with others, but it is for a purpose.

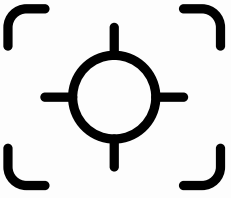
Practicing tactical vulnerability is about structuring moments and actions that cause us to be slightly more vulnerable - sharing something that is a bit below the surface of what we immediately are aware, and doing so with purpose. When tactical vulnerability is modeled by a leader, it is one of the most compelling catalysts for other leaders or team members to begin opening up. It would be reckless to assume or demand that these leaders share everything all the time or that they abandon safety for themselves or for others as an equal requirement. But, it is equally reckless to avoid any vulnerability at all.



VULNERABILITY OFFERS A POSSIBILITY THAT MORE PROFOUND GROWTH MAY OCCUR AND THAT BEING THOUGHTFUL ABOUT HOW WE SHARE AND WHAT WE SHARE IS ESSENTIAL.

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

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Under pressure and in challenging circumstances, we all have a tendency to spend ninety percent of our energy on things that are outside of our control. It does not matter how much power and influence a leader has. There are always things that can be controlled for law enforcement leaders and many things that cannot.

Any police chief will tell you that most of what they are responsible for enforcing came from someone else. Civil service regulations, changes in the law, local government policy, changing public opinion - all these things require mindfulness and awareness on the part of a leader, much of which is beyond their control.

Focusing on what we can control while being mindful of that which cannot be controlled would be easy if leaders were robots.

ONCE AGAIN, WE MUST FACE THE REALITY THAT LEADERS ARE HUMAN.

Navigating the tension between being mindful and taking action will always be tricky and require a bit of leadership savvy.

From a leader's perspective, we suggest developing the practice of clearly delineating between those things within the leader's control and those which are not. It is a fundamental leadership practice that is so often overlooked. In our studies of the strategies that allowed leaders to regulate their emotions in real-time, maintain convictions and their connections to stakeholders, the process of focusing on what they can control was near the top of the list. Some leaders in high-pressure moments actually practiced writing down the things within their control and separating those things outside of their control – then drawing a line between them. We would suggest that lines be dotted and not solid, indicating the necessity to still maintain awareness of what is happening outside their control. Finally, while maybe controversial, focusing on what we can control is about power on some level. Power is necessary to lead.

To suggest that power is not essential for leaders is to push it away and disguise it as something else - and that is reckless. Power is necessary to influence others. Too little, and nothing changes. Too much, and it changes us. The conscious effort to identify what is within our control is a part of what it means to see the power we have and focus our attention there.



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INVITE QUESTIONS AS WELL AS ANSWERS

In organizational structures that require a strong sense of command and control, answers are often emphasized over questions. Command and control structures are established most often in organizations where the stakes are high requiring decisive action. It's not surprising that in military or law enforcement settings, we see an emphasis on clear lines of communication and structures that define power and decision-making.



When the public's safety is on the line, we want decisive leadership and clear lines of authority. Here is the challenge.
A whole leader reformation in security and law enforcement requires us to maintain that same level of command clarity while inviting change, openness, and questions.

From a leader development perspective, answers are essential and sometimes provide decisive guidance for what to do next, but most development occurs through the challenging questions many leaders are asking, but have rarely been invited to ask out loud.

WHAT MOTIVATES ME?

AM I SUPPORTED?

AM I COMPETENT TO DO MY JOB WHEN THE EXPECTATIONS HAVE CHANGED?

WHAT RISKS AM I WILLING TO TAKE? WHAT IS MY PURPOSE?

These are just a sampling of the questions every leader is asking in some way, but may not be supported to ask out loud. While so much of the past leadership development paradigm has been about providing quick fixes and solutions for leaders, development is a deep questioning process. Leaders in corporate security and law enforcement are responsible for so many answers and knowledge of extensive policies and procedures, so it isn't surprising that answers are encouraged and questions are often avoided. Creating a training system that invites the most important development questions to the table is what a whole leader reformation is all about.

INVEST IN THOSE WHO ARE READY

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In every human organization, law enforcement or otherwise, we will always be required to deal with some leaders who are ready to learn and grow, and others who are less prepared. If all people were the same, it would make sense to simplify our leader development efforts into straightforward training programs. But, all people are not the same. And, all leaders are not the same. Over the years, our language and systems for developing leaders have been plagued by the words “talent” and “high potential.” A focus in leader talent development on high potential leaders is riddled with assumptions contrary to what the evidence on leader development would suggest is essential.

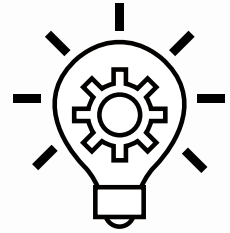
Referring to persons with “high potential” assumes that there are those with potential and those without. This fixed way of thinking about people is not only counterproductive to our efforts, but flies in the face of the best research on developmental efficacy, growth mindset, and even learning agility. Instead of thinking about our high potential leaders, our focus could be on what we refer to as our “high ready” leaders.

Developmental readiness is the extent to which a leader is ready to move into a season of learning and change. And, that begs the question: Is readiness something you either have or not, or is it something that can be developed? A focus on developmental readiness for security and law enforcement leaders invites us to see these leaders in different seasons of readiness and be aware of the language we are using that suggests to them that their readiness is fixed. A focus on developmental readiness is a constant awareness that we must avoid language that communicates a fixed mindset regarding officers' developmental potential - working hard at inviting the potential change that may be required if they are to become better versions of themselves. Like the rest of us, these leaders will not be motivated by being told they “should” be something different, but by inviting them to consider what they could be. If it wouldn't work for the rest of us, why would it work for a leader in security or law enforcement? High-ready leaders are those who are in a season of readiness to stretch, to grow, to learn, and to be learning agile.

By investing in and inviting the possibility of developmental readiness, we might discover leaders ready to step out and go first who we'd otherwise have missed and see more and more leaders taking risks necessary to learn and grow to the next level. When we see a leader responsible for our safety through a developmental lens, we avoid labeling them as good or bad at their jobs, and move toward seeing them as ready or not.



THINK LIKE AN ENTREPRENEUR



Not all of us need to think like entrepreneurs, but it takes all types of people to make our organizations work well. So, what might the research on the mindset of entrepreneurs tell us about the future of whole leader development in law enforcement? One reality is that entrepreneurs think differently than many classically trained leaders. As opposed to setting goals and then considering the resources that will be necessary to achieve those goals, entrepreneurs begin with four questions:

- **WHO AM I?**
- **WHO DO I KNOW?**
- **WHAT RESOURCES DO I HAVE AT MY FINGERTIPS?**
- **(AND) WHAT CAN I DO WITH ALL THAT?**

Because they start with those questions, entrepreneurs are perpetually hopeful. While some of us might consider ourselves more realists, entrepreneurs are difficult to shut down because they think about what they have and what they could do before considering the singularly focused goal. This way of thinking is difficult for leaders who have come up through the ranks where the risks associated with failure are high. Security and law enforcement are like that. When the risks of failure result in life or death at any given moment, it may cause leaders to apply that same way of thinking to everything. However, even in the most risk intolerant lines of work, a bit of entrepreneurial thinking regarding solutions can be beneficial. To the extent that an organization's culture does not support entrepreneurial thinking, leaders will feel pressure to focus on constraint instead of hope.

While a reasonable goal focus will always be necessary, providing models to leaders in security and law enforcement for thinking like entrepreneurs will open up possibilities, increase the likelihood of creating options in increasingly resource-constrained times, and increase adaptive capacity at times when it's needed most.

The training is simple - encourage leaders to ask these questions and provide the scaffolding necessary to discover their own abilities. First, who am I? Encourage leaders to think about their own calling and purpose, competence, personality, blind spots, and character strengths. Second, who do I know? Encourage leaders to think about the people in their organizations or communities who can help. Third, what resources do I have at my fingertips? Encourage leaders to identify what they have and not to stop with what they don't. And finally, what can I do with all of that? It is incredible to see the solutions that emerge in the most difficult of times when leaders begin to practice an entrepreneurial mindset.

GET STRATEGICALLY SURROUNDED

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Leading in security and law enforcement can be one of the loneliest jobs. As if leading wasn't hard enough, being one of these leaders can be incredibly isolating. For example, former peers are now direct reports, and your closest friends are now members of the community for whose safety you are now personally responsible. Therefore, a whole leader reformation in developing them requires us to consider how to encourage our leaders to get strategically surrounded and supported for the road ahead.



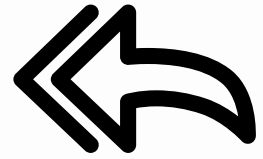
IF WE UNDERSTAND ONE THING, WE KNOW THE FUTURE WILL BE FULL OF PERSONAL CHALLENGES, AND THEY CANNOT FACE THOSE CHALLENGES ALONE.

Building strategic support for a leader in security and law enforcement is the process of ensuring that they have a network that challenges them and supports them at the same time. It is the process of helping a leader identify those who will give them feedback, those who will hold them up in the toughest of times, and those who will provide them with the mentoring and role modeling necessary to become the leaders they could be.

A strategic network requires intentional thought about where a leader wants to go and who can help them along the way. In that way, that network is customized to the unique developmental trajectory of every leader. Strategic networks that include mentors, peers, direct support, and honest feedback make all the difference for an emerging or an existing leader. But, the people in our networks do more than serve our ambitions. They also hold us up when we fall and give us opportunities to speak into the lives of others. They are the people who have our backs and defend our character and competence when it is questioned. Security and law enforcement leaders were never meant to lead alone. If we are to invest in whole leaders in law enforcement, we must ensure that a strategic network of support and feedback is in place for every leader.

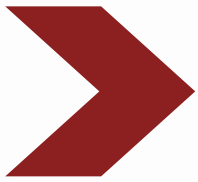


COMMIT TO THE LONG PLAY



A whole leader reformation in corporate security and law enforcement is a long-term investment. Few of us would deny that they are some of the most influential leaders in our communities, and investing in their development as whole leaders will require patience, diligence, and a commitment to a long haul investment in their preparation and support. Most leaders drawn to protect and serve others get there because of a calling to the work that is much larger than themselves. It's difficult to deny that. To assume they are drawn to this type of leadership because of something more selfish would require us to ignore the tremendous risks that these leaders and their followers take every day.

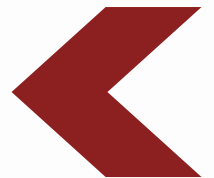
Any time a leader is drawn to serve because of a greater calling on their lives, that commitment, and their impact is something they know may outlive them. In the same way, a commitment to a reformation in corporate security and law enforcement is a longer-term investment in their development as whole human beings and whole leaders.



Reforming a culture in our security and law enforcement organizations where people are intentionally prepared to lead requires leaders who have made an intentional commitment to doing just that - to change the culture.

Cultural transformation and building leadership capability is not an easy or quick-fix process. Culture building is the purposeful integration of our existing systems and the deeper assumptions driving our behavior. It will not only be the responsibility of security and law enforcement leaders to create cultures of high stretch and support where whole leader development is the new norm - leaning into what has worked and integrating tactical preparation and whole leader preparation - but also a longer-term commitment on our part to provide the time and resources necessary to support the development of these critical leaders in our communities, organizations, and our government.

Until our world is fully at peace and the borders of our communities, organizations, and nations are never at risk, leaders who protect us will always be necessary. Until then, whole leaders in security and law enforcement will be a fundamental part of our hope for the future.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Named among the top 30 most influential I-O Psychologists, TEDx speaker, and featured in Forbes, Dr. Rob McKenna is the founder of WILD Leaders, Inc. and The WILD Foundation, and creator of the WILD Toolkit. His research and coaching with leaders across corporate, not-for-profit and university settings has given him insight into the real and gritty experience of leaders. His clients have included the Boeing Company, Microsoft, Heineken, Foster Farms, the United Way, Alaska Airlines and Children's Hospital. He is the author of numerous articles and chapters on leadership character, calling, effectiveness, and leadership under pressure. He served as the Chair of Industrial-Organizational Psychology at Seattle Pacific University up until 2020, with a total time at SPU of 25 years. His latest book, *Composed: The Heart and Science of Leading Under Pressure*, focuses on the specific strategies leaders can use to stay true to themselves and connected to others when it matters most. Rob lives in Washington with his wife, Jackie, and their two sons.

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Wanda Townsend is an Industrial and Organizational (I-O) Psychology and NeuroLeadership Practitioner with over 30 years of experience in coaching, developing, and leading high-performing individuals, teams, and organizations. For three decades, she has been energized by helping former employers transform their cultures through emotional intelligence training, neuroscience research, and leadership development in various roles, including Police Chief and Director of Police Services. Wanda is driven by her calling of "Teaching to Change Lives." She is currently serving as a Leader in Residence with WILD Leaders Inc focusing on whole and intentional leader development. Recently, Wanda launched her own coaching and consulting practice, Wanda Townsend LLC | Leadership Unleashed.

Wanda splits her time between her primary residence in Washington and her temporary residence in Nebraska. In her free time, she enjoys hiking, kayaking, and photography.



Dr. Daniel Hallak | [Website](#)

Nothing gets Dr. Daniel Hallak more excited than the opportunity to build authentic relationships and intentionally develop leaders. As the Chief Commercial Officer at WILD Leaders, Daniel drives strategic commercial initiatives, and other operations, product development, and marketing efforts that support the development of whole leaders. He is known for bringing energy and thoughtful research-based practices that actually make a difference. Before WILD, he spent over a decade developing whole leaders in business, academic, and not-for-profit settings. He's run his own coaching practice and has had experiences as a recruiter at Microsoft, a Career Management Consultant at Right Management Consultants and in a leadership development role at Slalom, an award-winning consulting firm. He's also served as a coach, professor, and advisor at three higher education institutions. Daniel has spoken at countless events, conferences, and professional associations. He earned his Ph.D. and M.A. in Industrial-Organizational Psychology from Seattle Pacific University. He lives in Washington with his wife, Kristin, and their three children.