



**Personal Excellence:**  
The Daily Habits of  
Leadership Success  
Tracy Nelson, SPHR, CPTD  
Aspire Talent Group

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**Tracy Nelson**  
President/CEO  
Aspire Talent Group

We use data and a scientific approach to talent optimization to help individuals, teams, and organizations **achieve more.**

*Leadership Development  
Instructional Design  
Online Learning  
Coaching/Consulting  
Assessments/Diagnostics  
Teambuilding/Team Development*



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**Learning Goals**

- Learn seven personal excellence leadership practices that will help you grow and enhance your leadership skills and effectiveness
- Translate the leadership practices into actionable daily habits that will optimize your leadership and career success!



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1) Point toward  
your  
“True North”

What is your “Why”?



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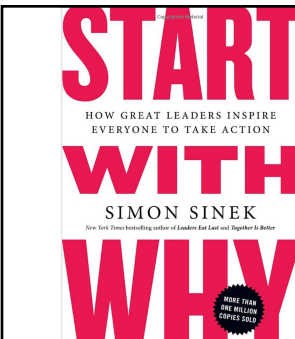
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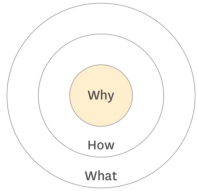
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Point toward your  
“True North”

- What does great leadership look like? What are the characteristics of great leaders?
- What values and attributes do YOU want to be known for as a leader? Which do you feel most resonate with who you want to be as a leader?



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Define your personal leadership "brand..."

- What is your overall leadership mission and purpose? What kind of leader do you want to be?
- How can you demonstrate your mission, purpose, and values in your daily actions and behaviors?

Example: Personal Leadership Mission Statement  
"To serve by encouraging and empowering the best in others so that our team serves our customers in improving their financial wellbeing..."



Personal brand is what people say about you when you leave the room.

- Jeff Bezos, Founder, Amazon.com

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Questions to help you uncover "your true north..."

- What gets you out of bed in the morning?
- What battles have you fought and overcome in your life story?
- If you could turn back time, what would you do differently? Why?
- If you could only use five words, how would you describe yourself?
- Who do you look up to? Who are your mentors that inspire you the most?
- What are the three best decisions you have made in your life?
- If you lived today over again, what would you have done differently?
- What are you grateful for?
- Write down your talents, passions, and values. How can you use them to serve and contribute to society?
- What does success look like to you?
- What price would you pay to give up on your dreams? What price would you pay to achieve them?
- If you had more time to do what you love, what would you do?
- If you had the chance, what would you tell your future self?
- How have you changed from the person you were five years ago?
- If you could run away, where would you go and why?
- If money wasn't an issue, what would you pursue?
- What piece of advice would you give to 5-year-old you? 16-year-old you? Right now?
- What is something you love about yourself but wouldn't want to admit out loud?
- What does your ideal day look like?
- What habit would you most like to break? What habit would you most like to start?
- What do you want your legacy to be?

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1) Point toward your "True North" Daily Behaviors

- Take time to reflect on your values and what your personal leadership brand looks like in action.
- Start the day with a moment of focus on your leadership mission, purpose and values
- Reflect on your upcoming daily activities and opportunities you will have to demonstrate the behaviors you defined as part of your leadership brand, i.e. authenticity, respect, passion, etc.
- Take a moment at the end of your day to reflect on where you were successful in living your values, and where you may have opportunities to learn from situations where you did not experience the success you would have liked.
- Go to your "mental best-self workshop" when needed i.e. challenging situations to navigate



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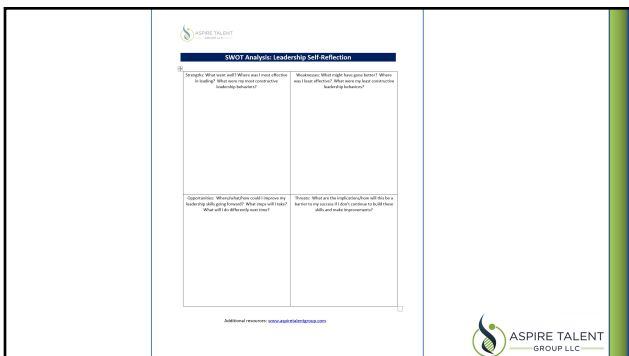
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### The Brain Science

We like to think of ourselves as logical, rationale creatures.

**BUT...**

We also know our brains "make stuff up!"

*Blind spots, unconscious bias, seeing what our brains want us to see, screening out information that contradicts our prevailing view of the world, reinventing incoming information*



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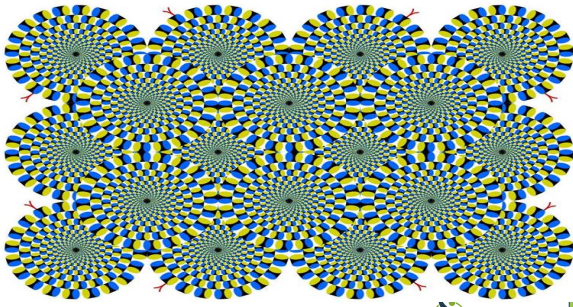
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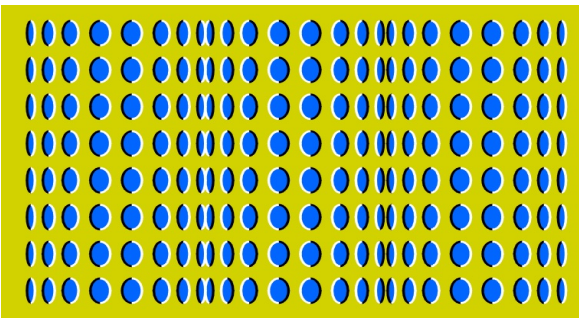
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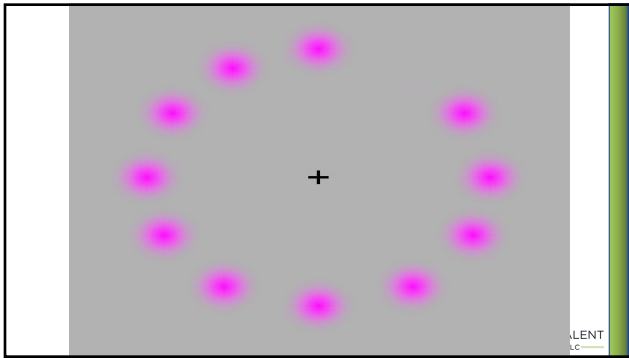
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Action

Beliefs

Conclusions

Assumptions

Meanings

Select

Observe

↓

I'll ignore John in the team meetings and pay attention to the other members and see how he likes that!
John thinks he could do a better job leading this project than I am so he is trying to undermine my leadership
John doesn't respect me and doesn't want to be on this team
John never pays attention to what I have to say and treats my ideas like they're not important
John doesn't like my idea and isn't engaged in the team project
John offered no ideas and didn't make eye contact with me or the rest of the team
When I was presenting my idea to the project team, John was looking at his phone and fidgeting in his seat

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### Self Management: Recognizing and Challenging Our Own Stories

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Action

Beliefs

Conclusions

Assumptions

Meanings

Select

Observe

↓

Identify a situation when you went up the ladder of inference.

- How did you respond?
- What was the outcome?
- What would you do differently – if anything?
- How will you self-monitor the assumptions you'll make going forward?

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### Self Management: Recognizing Our Own Triggers

- Situations that cause us to respond with our emotional self rather than our rational self
- The first step in managing emotions is to *identify* the situations that trigger you
  - Who are the people or what are the situations that tend to trigger me?
  - What specific things are said or done that cause me to respond emotionally rather than rationally?
  - Do I notice any patterns in the situations that tend to trigger me?
  - How can I tell when I've been triggered, i.e. what somatic sensations do I experience?



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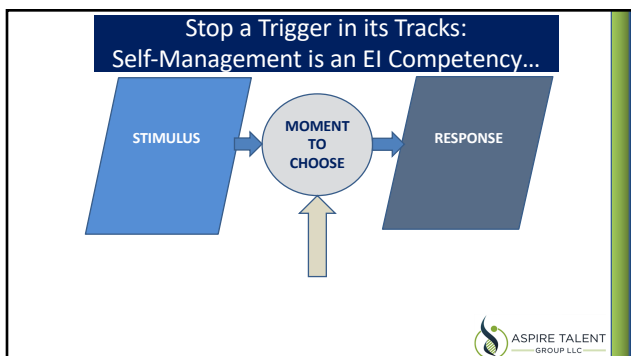
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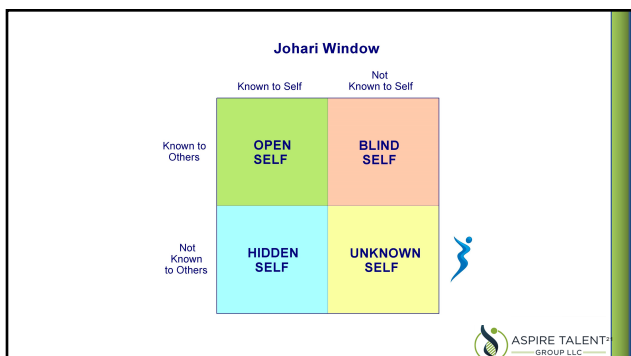
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## 2) Check Your Mindset Daily Behaviors

- Notice your internal dialogue, the “shoulds and shouldn’ts” that influence your daily thinking and decision-making
- If you find yourself “triggered” by someone or a situation in the workplace, pause to reflect on your own thinking and beliefs and how they may be influencing your reaction, i.e. what stories might you be telling yourself about what you are experiencing?
- Focus on being open-minded as you invite the thoughts and opinions of others
- Make a cognitive decision to choose constructive responses vs. unconstructive reactions



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## 3) Play Big!

**“What great things would you attempt if you knew you could not fail?”** Robert Schuller




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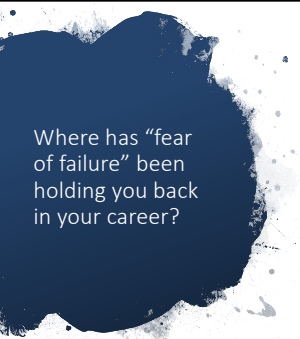
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Where has “fear of failure” been holding you back in your career?

- We have approximately 50,000 thoughts per day, 80% of them are the same thoughts we had yesterday.
- 90% of them are negative/judgmental/critical of ourselves or others



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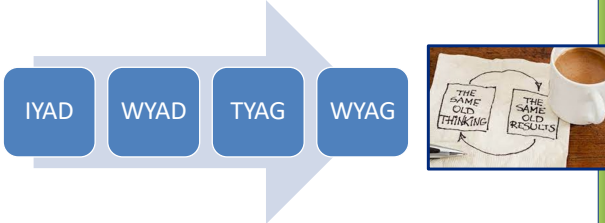
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**“If you always do what you always did, then you always get what you always got”**

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### 3) Play Big Reflection Questions

- What would it look like to “play bigger” than you are playing now?
- What actions would you need to take to step into your fear of failure and “do it anyway?”
- What is the worst thing that could happen if you try it?
- How could you set yourself up for success?



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### Breakout Group Discussion



- What would it look like to “play bigger” than you are playing now?
- What actions would you need to take to step into your fear of failure and “do it anyway?”
- What is the worst thing that could happen if you try it?
- How could you set yourself up for success?

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There will never be a better time than now to live your biggest and best life!





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### 3) Play Big Daily Behaviors

- Start the day with reflection:
  - Where do I have the opportunity to be courageous today?
  - What am I afraid to do, and how could I take some step forward today?
  - What's the worst thing that could happen?
  - How can I set myself up for success?
- Take action, jump in! Reward yourself for taking a step forward, however big or small!
- Practice end of day reflection and celebration of progress
- Be willing to "fail spectacularly!"



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### Tracy's Favorite "Play Big" Quote:

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better.

The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."



Theodore Roosevelt, 1910



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### 4) Focus on the Big Rocks First

Minute by minute:	What is the highest value use of my time right now, and what action should I take next?
Daily:	Focus on big rocks and big frogs first!
Weekly:	Plan and schedule the "big rocks" plus "fill my cup" time
Monthly:	Review status of progress toward goals, reward yourself!
Annually:	Review and update your goals, conduct a personal strategic planning session, and consult your "board of directors."

Stephen Covey, First Things First



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### Time/Energy Prioritization Matrix

Low Effort, High Impact	Medium Effort, High Impact	High Effort, High Impact
Low Effort, Medium Impact	Medium Effort, Medium Impact	High Effort, Medium Impact
Low Effort, Low Impact	Medium Effort, Low Impact	High Effort, Low Impact

**Impact/Importance** (vertical axis)  
**Effort** (horizontal axis)



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### Shifting attention to what You can control



**Don't "Feed the Beast..."**  
Reflection: Where am I wasting precious mental energy on things I can't control?



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#### 4) Focus on the Big Rocks First Daily Behaviors

- Plan your next day the night before
  - What are the "big rocks" you want to ensure are fit into your next day?
  - What is the highest value use of my time tomorrow?
  - What are the highest impact activities I should focus on?
  - What absolutely positively must be done before end of day tomorrow?
- Start your morning with a review of your goals for the day including big rock, frogs, and priorities
- Stick to your plan whenever possible, adjust and adapt your plan as needed to accommodate unanticipated priorities
- Don't waste mental energy on things you can't control
- Do an end of day reflection on status of items on your daily goals/plan, and begin planning your next day
- Accept that no day ever goes exactly as planned. Celebrate your successes and progress.



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#### 5) Be a Perpetual Learner

- "Sharpen the saw"
- Growth mindset vs. fixed mindset



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#### Throw away your "I can't do this" mentality....



...and replace it with "I don't know how, but I bet I can figure it out!"



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Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resists change</li> <li>• Struggles with feedback</li> <li>• Default response is "no"</li> <li>• Always needs to be "right"- look good, look smart</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly adaptable and flexible</li> <li>• Welcomes feedback, seeks it</li> <li>• Likes to hear new ideas</li> <li>• Likes to try new things, ok to "fail"</li> </ul>	

Adapted from Carol Dweck, Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

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The most growth limiting belief we can have is...



"I don't have anything to learn, I am already doing everything right. It is other people who need to change."

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**Neuroplasticity:**  
Make Your Brain  
Your Best Friend  
in Creating New  
Habits

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**Re-Wire Your Brain!**

Identify an unproductive habit you would like to change.

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**Re-Wire Your Brain!**

- Reflect on the impact of this habit on your life to date. How has this habit served you? What is your "payoff" for this habit?
- What are the risks of not changing the habit? How is the habit serving as a barrier for you?
- What would you like to change?
- What does success look like?

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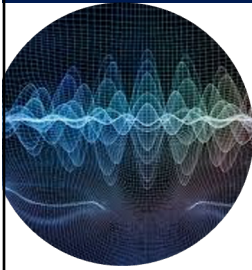
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### “Train Your Brain” into a new “comfort zone!”



- The brain can be trained to feed off bursts of dopamine sparked by rewarding experiences.
- One way to achieve this is by setting incremental goals. You are rewiring the brain to attach a dopamine response to the task/habit you want to reward.
- Allow yourself to experience frequent positive reward as you progress through a series of goals. Dopamine will flow as a result of your brain's positive reinforcement every time you take a step in a positive direction toward your new habit.
- Your brain learns what habits/activities lead to pleasurable feelings and releases dopamine to inspire you to act and obtain that reward once again. You then experience dopamine reward for the positive behavior and your brain will seek more.



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### 5) Be a Perpetual Learner Daily Habits



- Start of day reflection:
  - What opportunities do I have today to learn something new?
  - What actions will I take today to learn and develop new skills?
- Set aside scheduled time daily for self-directed learning activities, i.e. reading a book or articles, watching a Ted Talk, etc.
- Find ways to work learning into other activities, i.e. listen to a podcast while on the exercise bike, have something available to read when you are in the waiting room for a doc appointment, etc.
- Seek the thoughts, opinions, and ideas of others as you interact in the workplace
- Seek feedback on your performance, i.e. how did I do in the meeting today, anything I could have done differently?
- Reward yourself for trying new things, taking positive steps



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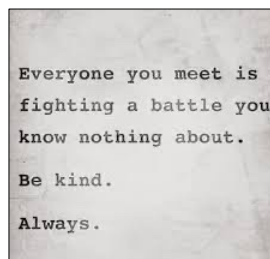
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### 6) Extend Grace

- Most people operate each day with good intent
- Our varying backgrounds, experiences, mental models, thinking patterns, communication styles, preferences, life demands, and needs sometimes clash in the workplace
- It is not up to us to point out the flaws and imperfections of others
- Sometimes good people demonstrate bad behaviors for reasons we may not know or see



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### "Extending Grace" Self Reflection

- Is my approach to other people generally kind and respectful, or can I sometimes be quick to be judgmental or critical of others?
- Do I tend to see the good qualities in others, or am I sometimes blinded only seeing through the lens of their weaknesses or failings?
- Where (or with whom) might I have some opportunities to be more tolerant and accepting?



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If you could stand in someone else's shoes, would you treat them differently? 



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### The Anger Iceberg



**Feelings we don't see**

INSECURE    WORRIED

HURT        FRUSTRATED

ANXIOUS

**Feeling we see**

ANGRY!!!

SCARED

EMBARRASSED



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### 6) Extend Grace Daily Habits

- Look for and see the best in others. Take time to recognize, acknowledge, and express appreciation for the efforts and contributions of those around you
- Everyone makes mistakes or handles situations in less-than-ideal ways at times. We are not all our best selves 100% of the time. Refrain from pointing out mistakes and imperfections in other people
- Remain calm and professional even when met with difficult behaviors. "Rise above" challenging behavior from others. Realize you may not know the whole story
- Where poor behaviors or poor performance need to be addressed, focus objectively on the behavior that needs to change, not the person. Continue to treat the person with respect and separate the behavior
- Acknowledge that while we can influence behavior and performance, the only behavior we have real control over is **our own**
- Extend grace to yourself when you have moments where you falter



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### 7) Role Model the Way

We can be the kind of person that when other people are around us, they act better. By being our best self, we bring out their best self



Adapted: Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*



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### 7) Role Model the Way Daily Habits

Full circle! What kind of leader do you want to be and how to you demonstrate your leadership brand on a daily basis in your actions and behaviors?

— Examples: Integrity: I say what I mean and mean what I say, I follow through on my commitments, I am honest and will admit when I make a mistake, etc.



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### 7) Role Model the Way Daily Habits

*In what current situations (personal or professional) do you have the opportunity to “role model the way...”?*



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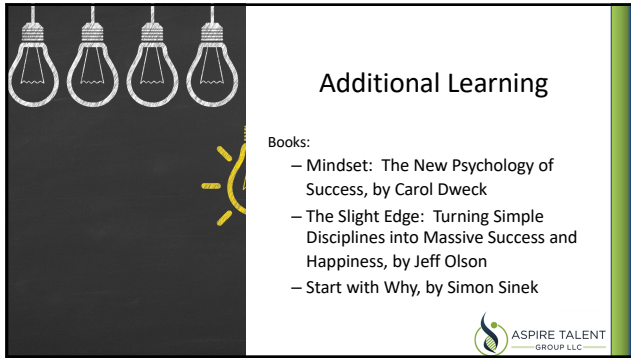
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## Additional Learning

Books:

- Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, by Carol Dweck
- The Slight Edge: Turning Simple Disciplines into Massive Success and Happiness, by Jeff Olson
- Start with Why, by Simon Sinek

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### Personal Excellence:

The Daily Habits of  
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