Praise for *Growing Influence*

“This is not your typical leadership book. *Growing Influence* delivers fresh, insightful principles in a way that prompts deep introspection and inspires action. Prepare to grow alongside the characters.”

—Abbey Louie, founder, Élan Consulting Group

“This book captures the heart of leadership. Ron and Stacy provide a clear road map to lead and grow your influence from a place of integrity and authenticity. Women and men will both benefit from the authors’ experience and guidance.”

—Amanda Visosky, program director and leadership coach, Idaho Women in Leadership

*Growing Influence* is an excellent read for those who feel stuck at any stage or level of their career. Approachable and insightful, this business fable provides both spiritual nourishment for the corporate soul as well as practical strategies for how to take back control over your career and parlay that into a purpose you are enthused about. It’s an especially good read for rising stars who have hit barriers created by the 20th century fixed mindsets purported by those who still use a ‘management’ style approach to leading people. *Growing Influence* is clearly ushering in the next generation of truly accountable and empowered self-leadership.”

—Emily Soccorsy, cofounder, Root + River

*Growing Influence* weaves an accessible story using allegory and addresses timely issues about character and intergenerational communication. Using story and connection, this book tells the tale of empathy and mentorship and reminds us that sometimes we find the greatest gifts for our work in the most unexpected places.”

—Courtney Feider, behavioral strategist and executive coach

*Growing Influence* uses the #metoo theme to teach all of us how to have a more positive influence and greater success in our careers, marriages, and families. Whether you are a CEO or just starting down the leadership path, *Growing Influence* provides practical principles that can transform leaders, their teams, and the companies they work for. The book provides a tutorial for success through positive influence if you work hard, have talent, and are committed—whether you are female or male, young or old, or any ethnicity.”

—Rick Stott, CEO, Superior Farms
“Growing Influence skillfully examines one of the most complex concepts in today’s world: how to create influence in a way that makes meaningful change for an individual and the organization of which he or she is a part.”

—Rick Bowers, president, TTI Success Insights

“It is hard to write a business fable that’s the right blend of business and story. Ron and Stacy have certainly done that with Growing Influence. The story moves along at a brisk but believable pace—with the lessons and nuggets of wisdom artfully placed in key points of the story. From a purely practical perspective, Growing Influence should be in the library of every high-potential emerging leader. The lessons on how to truly create influence are both contemporary and timeless. Definitely a must-read to our circle of influence.”

—Justin Foster, cofounder, Root + River

“The book is a wonderful narrative on the power influence has in the development of different leadership traits that can be applied for both personal and professional development. It provides numerous examples from the authors’ over forty years in the study of leadership, offering powerful tools, through the art of storytelling, for growth throughout the journey of life.”

—May Lam, executive director, TTISI China

“One of the greatest gifts is a new way of thinking and understanding that enables true personal growth. In Growing Influence, Ron and Stacy offer a simple, elegant model, as only real masters can—one that can actually be applied right now, to grow as individuals and influencers. Read and implement this book for a lifetime of influence.”

—Padraig Berry, founder and CEO, OneFocus

“Growing Influence gave me a much-needed fresh view on how to tackle small obstacles we face while pursuing a goal, and above all it reminded me how very important personal accountability is in creating a path for reaching goals. I am now planning on adding discretionary time to my daily schedule so I can work on strategy before the everyday hustle starts. Finally understanding that ‘I cannot control everything 100 percent with my kids’ helps me stop fighting the interruption of plans due to situations out of my control and instead focus on the solution for that unexpected event.”

—Vanessa Boettcher, vice president, TTI Success Insights
GROWING INFLUENCE

A STORY OF HOW TO LEAD WITH CHARACTER, EXPERTISE, AND IMPACT

RON PRICE AND STACY ENNIS
This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents are either a product of the author’s imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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18 19 20 21 22 23 24 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First Edition
To the women and men who care enough about becoming great leaders that they will conquer every obstacle along the way.
Emily twirled her pen, watching it spin once, twice, before catching it between her thumb and index finger. She looked out the window at the long shadows cast by thickly crowned trees. Their shade looked like bellies to her—big, pregnant bellies. But then again, everything reminded her of the baby.

Jason was ecstatic. And she was too, except for the gnawing feeling that having this baby meant another stall in her career of at least a year or two. If Mitchell thought she was overextended now, what would he think when this child was born?

And it wasn’t just Mitchell. She’d overheard a comment by one of her coworkers the other day, a single guy who worked in a different department. “She just left for her maternity vacation,” he’d said to another male colleague, laughing. “Don’t you wish we could do that? And then come back and work basically part time?”

Emily hadn’t said anything. Everything in her body had screamed
at her to set him straight, but she hadn’t. She had been too busy think-
ing of herself and what he’d say when she went on maternity leave.

To be fair, there were other parents and a handful of single women in her organization who vocally supported maternity and paternity leave. One of the two women in executive leadership roles had even left a major meeting to care for a sick child. Her decision had caused a rumble of general disapproval about “priorities” not just in Enertec but throughout the industry. Still, it was encouraging that she’d left the meeting, regardless of the backlash.

Emily was grateful to have a few allies, but that wouldn’t be enough—there needed to be a cultural shift, and the only way she saw that happening was by starting with herself and her team. Telling off an insensitive coworker in the hallway wasn’t what she needed to do. She needed to gain influence.

Emily checked her watch. 5:30. She rolled her chair back and stood, then sat and rolled back toward her desk. Jason wouldn’t be home with Henry until 6:15, so why head home now? The office was quiet—most of her coworkers had cleared out early—and she still had the assignment from David. She had been pondering his question all week and wanted to write some thoughts down before they met the next morning.

Emily reached into her bag for her journal and a pen. She tapped her keyboard to wake her computer from sleep mode, pulled up a browser, and typed in the word “integrity.” One definition caught Emily’s eye, so she wrote down “the quality or state of being com-
plete or undivided.”¹ David had asked her to think about integrity in the dimension of character leadership. She wrote in her journal:

¹ “Integrity.” Merriam-webster.com.
I see integrity in character leadership as staying connected to my values, even in frustrating, challenging, or difficult situations. To me, character leaders are people I respect because of the way they treat other people, stay true to their word, and live ethically. They often have strong convictions, but they don’t express them as divisive opinions-as-facts. They listen well. They lead respectfully. They are transparent. They live in a “quality or state of being complete or undivided” because they remain connected to their core—to their values.

This is the type of leader I want to be. I want to be influential because I’m living fully and completely in alignment with my heart. I want people to trust me because I am honest and truthful. I want them to feel heard, like someone is really looking at them and listening to what they have to say. In that way, I suppose, a character leader is fully present. Character leadership, I think, requires a certain vulnerability that expert and positional leadership do not.

One thing I’m struggling with, though, is how the three dimensions of leadership interact. I know position matters. So does expertise. But how much? Do I put most of my attention into character? How much do I focus on expertise? If I put all my energy into character and expertise, will I ever grow my position in the company? I’m looking forward to getting answers to these questions during my discussions with David.
Emily dated the top of the page and placed the journal in her bag. She had two handsome boys to get home to.

The next morning, Emily arrived at Slow by Slow twenty minutes early. She wanted to read before David arrived. After ordering her coffee, she made her way to the long table at the back of the shop and sat near the wall, facing the stairs.

Emily reached into her bag, pulled out Lean In, a book on women in leadership she’d purchased years ago but had just recently started reading, and opened up to her bookmark. She scanned the page to find the spot where she’d left off.

“It is impossible to control all the variables when it comes to parenting,” it read. “For women who have achieved previous success by planning ahead and pushing themselves hard, this chaos can be difficult to accept.”

This wasn’t exactly the rallying cry Emily had been hoping for, but at least it was real. She read on as Sandberg detailed her first maternity leave, during which she was constantly working from home, barely enjoying her new baby, and then her second leave, when she actually unplugged and enjoyed her children.

“Slowly, it began to dawn on me that my job did not really require I spend twelve full hours a day in the office,” Sandberg wrote. “I became much more efficient—more vigilant about only attending or setting up meetings that were truly necessary, more

2 Sheryl Sandberg, Lean In (New York: Knopf, 2013), 125, 129.
determined to maximize my output during every minute I spent away from home. . . . I tried to focus on what really mattered.” Sandberg essentially ran a company, and even she was able to find a way to be present at home and at work.

By 9:00, the time Emily was expecting David, she was feeling much better—inspired, even. She closed her book and watched the stairway, excited for their discussion. At 9:05, he emerged with a smile and a wave. Emily stood.

“David! So glad to see you,” she said.

“Glad to see you, too, Emily.” He had a to-go cup in his hand. “Shall we walk today?”

“Sounds nice. Let me get this to go.” Emily gathered her book and bag. As they walked toward the door, she noticed he was moving slower than normal, and the bags under his eyes were still there.

“Everything OK?”

“Oh, yes,” he said. “Just a little tired.”

“You sure?”

David waved her concern away. “No, no. I’m fine. And anyway, I should be asking you that. How are you feeling?”

“A little nauseous, but good.” She tapped her coffee mug. “Cutting caffeine has been hard. Decaf just isn’t the same.”

“Need a refill?” the barista asked Emily as they approached the counter.

“Just a warm-up. Decaf. And can you make it to go?”

“Yep.”

David glanced at the book tucked under Emily’s arm. “*Lean In*, huh? I enjoyed that book.”

“You’ve read it?”
“Of course I have. You look surprised.”
“A little, yeah.” Emily dropped her bag to the ground and knelt to put her book inside. “I can’t say I’ve met a man yet who has read it—let alone a retired CEO.” She laughed. “You continue to astonish me.”
The barista handed Emily her coffee and a cardboard sleeve. “This is hot.”
“Got it. Thank you.”
David nodded to the barista.
“Shall we?” Emily said to David, sliding the sleeve onto her cup. “I was thinking we could walk toward the library and onto the greenbelt.”
“Perfect. And then you’ll tell me what you meant by ‘ignore the position so you can get the position,’ right?”
David laughed. “In due time. Now, I gave you an assignment last time,” he said as they made their way outside. “Did you have time to complete it?”
“I did. I thought about it all week, and I spent some time writing about it last night. Would you like to read what I wrote?”
David nodded as Emily handed over her coffee, slid her bag from her shoulder, and retrieved her journal. She clutched it in her hands. “Before you read this, and we get into a whole discussion about integrity and whatnot, can I tell you what I learned this week?”
“Sure,” David responded, handing back her coffee. “What’s on your mind?”
The two stopped at an intersection and waited for the light to change. “Well, last time you talked about leading with logic and following with emotion. That’s such a powerful concept, and I’ve started noticing that the people around me often do the opposite. All week
long, as I’ve sat in meetings or talked with other leaders, I’ve asked myself, ‘Which is in front, emotion or logic?’ And I can’t believe how revealing that is, just to ask that simple question.”

“Was there a specific instance that stood out?”

“Yes, in one meeting with my peers.” As they crossed the street and continued toward the greenbelt, Emily shared that she’d been in a meeting with other managers in the organization. They were talking about a new documentation platform senior leaders had asked them to use, replacing the software they’d built in the company’s early days. Managers who had come through the trainee program were emotionally tied to the software they’d helped build, while newer hires were excited about the change. They’d spent nearly an hour discussing when and how to introduce the new platform to their teams and had gotten nowhere.

“You know when the frustration in a room is so thick you can almost feel it?” David nodded as Emily went on. “I began to notice that managers who had come through the trainee program with me were sending us into circular arguments, while the newer managers were growing frustrated and not staying focused on solutions, either. It became us versus them.” She shook her head. “Normally, I might have been right in there, adding to the back and forth, but there I was, observing. I didn’t say much the entire meeting. Finally, I suggested we regroup the next afternoon. I asked each manager to bring three things they’d like to see in the transition, and we’d work together to strategize. Everyone seemed glad to get out of there.”

David was silent for several steps. They’d entered a quiet portion of Eighth Street. Instead of walking toward the greenbelt, he
headed toward a bridge overlooking the river. He stopped when they reached the middle of the bridge and placed his forearms on the rail, looking out at the water. Emily stood next to him.

“You know,” he began, “you’re learning one of the most valuable lessons about how a leader uses emotional intelligence to influence others. Of course, there’s a lot more to emotional intelligence than awareness and managing your own emotions; it’s also being able to understand and work with other people’s emotions. That’s what you did in that meeting.”

“I guess I did.” She leaned against the rail, watching leaves and branches in the river below disappear under the bridge. “The real test will come in tomorrow’s meeting.”

“Right, but you should be proud of what you’ve accomplished so far. You’re growing yourself as a leader, because the first step to leadership growth is self-awareness—a greater ability to stand back and recognize what’s happening within you and around you. You stepped in and influenced a situation that was going nowhere.”

Emily realized she was still holding her journal. “Well, I’m glad you think I’m growing, because I’m not sure I did what you wanted with the assignment of defining integrity in character leadership.”

“What do you mean?” David asked.

“Well, I was able to define what I think integrity means for character. But I’m having a hard time understanding how all this fits together. I know the three dimensions of leadership—character, expert, positional—is the key thread, the main idea I need to keep anchoring back to. But I’m a little puzzled because you said there were three different definitions for integrity, and I don’t know how it all connects.”
“You’re right. There are three dimensions of leadership. Each is important, and integrity within each is defined differently. Today we’re going to talk about integrity in character leadership; we’ll get to the others soon. Let’s see what you wrote.” She opened the journal to her most recent entry and handed it to him. He set his cup on the rail.

Emily couldn’t help but study David’s face as he read. He looked so—what was it? Engaged. Like he was reading the best book of his life.

Finally, he looked up. “This is great, Emily. Really thoughtful.” Emily smiled. “Thanks.”

“You say, ‘To me, character leaders are people I respect because of the way they treat other people, stay true to their word, and live ethically.’ Later, you say, ‘They live in a “quality or state of being complete or undivided” because they remain connected to their core—to their values.’ This is insightful.”

Emily’s face flushed. She’d never heard her personal writing read aloud before. “Well, thank you. But to be honest, I’m not sure I could get specific about what that means, ‘connected to their values.’ I think that phrase is thrown around a lot, but when I really consider it, I don’t know that I could even list my own values, and I certainly couldn’t define the values of my boss or boss’s boss.”

“That’s OK. For a long time, I felt the same way.” He handed her journal back. “Want to keep walking?”

“Sure.”

They continued along the length of the bridge, heading toward a curving path that would take them onto the greenbelt, which ran
the length of the Boise River. As they entered the greenbelt, they dropped their empty coffee cups into a trash bin.

“One of my coaches back in my CEO days challenged me to think about character differently and broaden my definition of integrity,” David said. “And that quest led me to a book by Jim Loehr called *The Only Way to Win.*”

Emily pulled her phone from her back pocket, opened her notes app, and typed in the book title. “What was so profound about it for you?”

“Reading it changed the way I thought about integrity in character leadership. As I applied what I learned in my own leadership, I built on Loehr’s ideas. I began to recognize that character can be defined by how we answer two questions. The first question is, what values will I choose to govern myself? And the second question is, what values will I choose to relate to other people?”

Emily tilted her head in thought. “That is such a different way to look at it. I typically think of values as a list of ways you want to live your life, like honesty or loyalty. But you’re saying to frame it as two lists, one for myself and one for how I treat others. Tell me more.”

“Let’s think a little bit about what values you could choose to govern yourself. Identifying values doesn’t mean you’re going to be perfect—you’re kind of creating your own leadership constitution, defining the things that are most important to you. At the end of your career, you want to be able to say, ‘I governed myself according to these things.’”

“Mind if we sit?” Emily said, motioning to a nearby bench looking out over the river. “I’d like to write some of this down.”
“Good idea.”

They settled in, and Emily opened her journal. She looked at her previous entry, then flipped to a new page and wrote *Values by which I choose to govern myself* at the top. “I guess I wrote about some of my values already,” she said. “I want to be honest. I don’t want to get to the end of my career and realize I’ve deceived others or been dishonest with myself.”

“That’s a great one. What are some other values you can think of?”

“Well, I want to be productive—get a lot done.”

“OK. Maybe we could call that self-management?”

“Yeah, that’s it.”

“As a matter of fact, I have my own definition of self-management: organizing and executing around priorities and managing my emotions well.”

“I like that. I’m going to write that down,” Emily said. When she’d finished writing, she looked at David. “I’m guessing you have a list of your own values?”

“I do. I have five main values by which I choose to govern myself. But those are mine, and you should develop your own list.”

Emily raised her eyebrows. “Sounds like an exercise in self-awareness.”

“Yep.” He chuckled, retrieved a piece of paper from his satchel, and handed it to Emily. On it were two columns with around twenty items in each list. “I spent some time putting this together for you. It’s a values checklist of sorts, but it’s not a complete list. My hope is that you’ll add to it. Why don’t you start with my lists and see which values resonate for you?”
## GROWING INFLUENCE

### Values by which I govern myself

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-management</th>
<th>Gratitude</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Humility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help-seeking</td>
<td>Courage</td>
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<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Balance</td>
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<td>Resiliency</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
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<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Self-acceptance</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Self-respect</td>
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<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
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<td>Positivity</td>
<td>Faith</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Joy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal achievement</td>
<td>Ambition</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Values by which I relate to others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compassion</th>
<th>Persuasive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
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<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Generosity</td>
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<td>Empathy</td>
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<td>Openness</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
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<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Justice</td>
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<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Love</td>
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<td>Communicative</td>
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<td>Motivating</td>
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<td>Empowering</td>
<td>Respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diplomacy</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emily looked at the paper. He’d clearly put a lot of time into creating this document for her. She surveyed his lists, mentally checking off the values that mattered most to her.

“Wow, thank you,” she said. “I can’t believe you put these together. I’ll define my values and add to these lists if I can.” She glanced at the two values she’d written in her journal, then out at the river. “Does it ever feel like a lot of pressure? I feel like once I define these values, I really have to live them—no exceptions.”

“You’re not always going to live up to them,” David said. “You’re human. Can I tell you a story?”

Emily nodded. David told her about a time he lost $5 million, putting him and his wife $1 million in debt. He’d had financial health his whole life—never excessively wealthy but always had money in the bank. But then he made a big business bet and was defrauded. Because of the legal manipulation, he ended up losing that $5 million and going into debt.

Everyone around him said he should file for bankruptcy because it was a business failure, not a personal one, and that’s really what bankruptcy laws are for. But in his heart, he knew he could pay it all back. If he filed, it would be a bankruptcy of convenience. So he plowed his way through for more than a decade and paid every penny back.

“Resiliency and accountability are values by which I choose to govern myself. If I hadn’t defined those, I’m not sure I would have made the decision I made. Looking back now, I’m glad I did it that way, because character is more important than my bank account. Values guide us in times of tough decision making—through hardships. I’m not always perfect, and you won’t be either.” He turned to
face her. “My values help me be more disciplined and accountable. They’ve caused me to ask for other people’s help, even though it doesn’t come naturally, because I’ve defined seeking help as a value. My values remind me of who I want to be, not just who I am.”

“Wow, that’s a powerful way to look at values.”

“A values-first focus really shifts the way you interact with the world.” He pointed to the second column on his prepared list, which Emily was holding in her left hand, a pen in her right. “Next, we have values by which you choose to relate to others. Can you think of some for you?” He saw her looking at the list, so he added, “Just off the top of your head.”

Emily looked up. “Right away, I can think of one: loyalty.” She created a new section in her journal and wrote down loyalty.

“What does loyalty mean to you?”

Emily studied a great blue heron as it skimmed the water, scooping up breakfast. “For me, being loyal is not looking for what I can get from people. It’s sticking with them through the hard stuff.”

“That’s a great example. For me, loyalty means not talking about somebody when they aren’t there in a way I wouldn’t talk about them when they are present.”

“Great definition. Give me a minute while I write that down.”

David watched her finish writing. “Good. What else?”

“Well, partly because I feel like people make unfair judgments about me because of my gender, I want to be inclusive. I want to be accepting of others—not reject them because they’re different.” Emily wrote down inclusive before continuing. “And maybe another one is collaborative.” She wrote that down, too.

“What does being collaborative look like?”
“I guess it means demonstrating the kindness and respect that we added to our list last time—in the character column.” She wrote down kindness and respect. Emily stared at her list. “I’m not sure what else to put on there.”

“Let’s talk a little bit about empathy. What does it mean to you?”

“Hmm. Good question. I suppose it means you care about other people, and you’re sympathetic to their situation.”

“Those sound like good things, but they’re not the definitions of empathy,” David said.

To the point again, Emily thought. She grinned. “OK, tell me what empathy is, then.”

“Empathy is the ability to see something through another person’s experience, to be able to identify with the emotions they’re experiencing without making any judgments about whether those emotions are right or wrong.”

“That’s a better definition. It actually makes me think of an example. Let’s see if I can share it without getting emotional—‘leading with logic,’ as you would say.”

The heron was back, and Emily watched it take another dive, readying herself to discuss something she didn’t often share. She described a conflict she’d had with her mom a few months prior, one so deep they couldn’t be in the same room for more than a few minutes without one of them getting frustrated. Her mom had criticized Emily for showing up late to a family dinner, saying Emily should find a job that doesn’t require such long hours and accusing her of being overcommitted to her work. They’d gone back and forth for several minutes before her mom had stormed out of the dining room and refused to return. Since that night, Emily had talked with
Jason about the confrontation so many times she felt like her voice would give out—if her heart didn’t first.

Finally, one evening after Henry had gone to bed, Jason had looked her in the eyes and said, “Em, maybe you could try listening without judging. She’s angry, and you’re angry. It’s true you do a better job of managing your emotions, but maybe all your mom needs is to be heard.”

The next day, Emily had called her mom and asked to meet. They’d sat in a quiet restaurant, and Emily listened for a full twenty minutes. She hadn’t tried to justify or defend. She had simply attempted to identify with what her mom was feeling. Those twenty minutes had transformed their relationship.

Emily cleared her throat, willing away the emotion that had snuck its way into her voice as she talked. “So, yeah, I’d like to add empathy to my list. Because it changed my connection with my mom. It’s definitely a value by which I want to relate to others.”

“Thanks for sharing that story,” David said.

Emily cleared her throat again. “Sure.” Her relationship with her mom had been so fraught for months, and talking about it brought everything back up for her. Still, it showed the power of values and why they’re so important to define. If she didn’t define them, how would she be able to intentionally live them? She took a deep breath to clear her emotions, grateful that David was comfortable in silence.

“OK, back to our conversation,” she said. “So, my homework is to define my values. I can do that . . . at least I hope so. How many?”

“No limit. I have around ten in each list, but you can have seven or twenty or however many makes sense. But here’s the next homework: Identify the five most important values in each list.”
“That sounds tough. They’re all so important.”

“True. But here’s how you might start. Pick the most important one in the list. Then, once that’s chosen, pick the most important one in the list that remains, and so on until you have five. You might think about journaling about the five you choose, too. And you’re probably going to change your mind a lot as you go through this activity, but at the end you’ve got the five that you’ve really given some serious thought to. And maybe in a year you’ll change them again, and that’s OK.”

“It sounds like you’re wanting me to spend a lot of time sorting through this. I trust that it’s necessary, and I’ll do it, but why is it so important?”

“You’re right. This is hard work. But it’s important because this is about who you want to become, and who you want to become as a human being is at the core of your future leadership influence, not to mention your personal relationships and parenting. Too many leaders don’t define their values, and someday they get a big title and a lot of authority, but they’re unsatisfied because the route they chose to get there isn’t connected to how they want to govern themselves or relate to others. They haven’t defined their values, and because of that, they’re highly vulnerable to failure.

“Your successes are as much of a test as your failures. And you’ll pass or fail those tests based on two things. First, if you know who you are, and second, if you have a clear picture of where you should be going. But if you don’t know who you are, other people will define you, and they’ll probably take you somewhere you shouldn’t be.

“So, back to the question of ‘Why is it so important?’ It’s important because you’re going to be successful, Emily. There’s no doubt
in my mind. What I don’t know is how you’re going to handle that success, whether you’ll stay rooted in your values once you make it to the top.”

“I—I don’t know what to say to that,” Emily said. “Thank you for believing in me, and also challenging me.”

“Always.”

Emily sat on her back porch. Henry was splashing in his kiddie pool. She had to admire the kid—he could play alone for what seemed like hours. All she had to do was give him a couple dozen books inside or water of some kind outside, and he was set.

She was set, too, with her journal, a pen, and David’s two lists: values by which I choose to govern myself and values by which I choose to relate to others. She’d spent some time after their meetup studying David’s lists and researching values online. She’d made her initial lists, ten for governing herself and twelve for relating to others. Now, she had to determine her top five from each.

Across from her sat Jason, absorbed in emails. She knew he’d had a busy week and was still playing catch-up from all the time off he’d taken when Henry was sick. He looked up. “Everything OK? How’s your nausea from earlier?”

“Oh, yeah. I’m fine. You’re just so serious over there.”

“Didn’t you say you needed quiet to be able to think?” Emily grinned. “Yep. I do need to focus.”

“Would iced tea help?”

“You’re the best.”
He walked by, placing a hand briefly on her belly, and then disappeared inside. As Henry made wrecking-ball noises in his pool, Emily followed David’s instructions, picking the most important value from the first list. It took her a full five minutes to decide on peace. Yes, peace was the perfect articulation of her deepest desire at home and at work—a peacefulness that extends to her motherhood and leadership. She moved on, taking her time selecting her next value: courage. When Jason emerged with iced tea, she offered a grateful smile and kept on, until she’d completed the activity five times for the values by which she chooses to govern herself.

“M-o-o-o-o-m,” a voice called from twenty feet away.

“Yeah, Henry?”

“I’m a dino constructor!”

Emily laughed. “What’s that, bud?”

“I’m a dino constructor! I build towers and knock them over!”

Emily watched as he stacked blocks in his pool, then put his arms out wide like a half-mummy, half-T-rex, and knocked the blocks over.

“What a silly dino constructor,” Emily said. “Hey, buddy?”

“Yeah, mama?”

“Mama needs to focus for a little bit. Can you be a quiet dino constructor?”

Jason stood. “I’ve got it.”

He retrieved the hose, attached a sprinkler, and set it up across the yard. In seconds, Henry was on to his next imaginary world.

“Thanks,” Emily said as Jason settled back at his laptop.

“You bet.”

She set out to complete the same activity with the other list, selecting five values by which she chooses to relate to others. The
first one was easy: present. It was the thing she wanted in every interaction, with Jason and Henry, with friends and family. Her next values took more time as she considered each one carefully, eventually selecting four more. When the lists were complete, she stood. Henry was playing in the sprinklers, building “rain towers” by stacking his blocks under the water. She slid open the sliding glass door, grabbed her laptop off the kitchen counter, and returned to the patio table.

Emily opened her laptop and pulled up a text document. In it, she typed her two sets of five values. Next to each value, she included a definition.

**Values by which I govern myself**

- **Peace:** Speak and act in a way that brings balance and calm to my home and work; avoid unnecessary or petty disagreements. Be kind. Love people well.
- **Courage:** Do things that scare me; stand up for others who lack power or voice. Do the right thing even when it’s the hard thing.
- **Curiosity:** Ask questions. Speak up when something doesn’t make sense. Be a continual learner through reading, listening, and studying.
- **Determination:** When the goal is worthy, give it everything and then some.
- **Contribution:** Volunteer at least once a month and contribute financially to a cause that is meaningful to me. At home, be an equal partner in parenting and household duties.
Values by which I relate to others

- **Present**: Be mindful of the person I’m with or activity I’m doing. Be others-focused by listening, reflecting, and asking questions.

- **Loyal**: Be there for the people I care about, especially in the low points; don’t talk about others behind their backs—only say things I’d say with them in the room.

- **Empathy**: Recognize my limited perspective, and treat all people like they matter. Engage Henry in conversations about what makes people different and special.

- **Collaborative**: Roll up my sleeves and jump in when needed, whether in mindshare or doing the work. In parenting, be a team member; in life, include Jason in important decisions.

- **Persuasive**: Influence others through my words and actions. Lead with logic and follow with emotion.

Then, she retyped both of the values lists David had provided and added values to each. She bolded the new items, some of which didn't make it onto her lists of five. For self: peace, curiosity, authenticity, contribution, growth, learning, adventure. For others: present, inclusive, respectful, community, equality, supportive, mentoring. Finally, she pulled up a new email.

Hi, David,

I hope you’re having a nice Sunday. I spent some time working on my lists today, and I’ve selected my top five from each. I also added a few to your list. See attached.
You’ll notice in my assignment that I went an extra step. After clarifying my values, I decided to define them. Understanding what they mean uniquely to me felt like an important part of deepening my commitment to character.

Thanks for your time yesterday. I’m really looking forward to our discussion next weekend. We’ll be talking about expert leadership, right?

See you soon, and thank you, again.

Emily

She reread her message, her mouse hovering over the send button. For some reason, it was strange sending David an email, maybe because it was their first time interacting outside of their in-person meetings. Finally, she hit send and then sat quietly, watching Henry play. The kid had the best imagination—always inventing new creatures and worlds, entertaining himself in a way that felt so foreign to her at this stage in her life. He’d rekindled a creativity and love for life that she’d lost in her twenties, a time she referred to as The Pursuit because she’d been so narrowly focused on career success. Little else had mattered.

She’d had two life-openers: marrying Jason and becoming a mom. Both of her boys had opened her up, expanded her view of life, provided balance. They’d also disrupted her world, especially Henry. Caring for a baby was hard. And here she was, about to start all over again with another child.

No sleep. Endless diapers. Throw-up. Inconsolable crying. Breast
pumping in the old computer room-turned-supply closet that had been halfheartedly converted into a pumping lounge. Those were the realities of having a newborn. She was going to be a zombie for at least a year, but she’d have to power through and hope Mitchell didn’t decide she was unfit for her career.

Still, thanks to her meetings with David, she had a feeling of power she hadn’t had before. She saw an opportunity to influence her bosses and colleagues. Glancing at the handwritten values, she realized that she’d just engaged in something important, an activity few people take the time to do. How many leaders define how they choose to live their lives and treat other people?

Through focusing on character leadership, she could at the very least control her behaviors by keeping them tied to her values. And if David was right, focusing on how she relates to others and governs herself would set the foundation for lasting influence that would mean more than a title or pay raise. Perhaps she could even pave the way for other women to have better experiences at work by sharing what she was learning from David.

*Ding.* Emily’s thoughts were interrupted by an email notification. She glanced at the name: David. She hadn’t expected a response so quickly! Emily clicked the email and read his reply.

Emily,

I’m impressed. You’ve added depth to my lists, and the values you selected show me how seriously you took this activity. I appreciate that you defined what your values mean to you, and I know you’ll see the extra time investment pay off in your quest
to become a character leader. Well done. I'll look forward to seeing you next weekend.

Warmly,
David

Emily caught herself smiling at her computer. She looked up, saw Jason and her dino constructor playing in the sprinkler, shut her computer, and ran over to join them.

The three played in the water for another fifteen minutes before collapsing on the grass together.

“Mommy?” Henry said.

“Yeah?”

“You’re the best mommy.” She met Jason’s eyes before kissing Henry on top of the head.

“Thanks, bud,” she said. “You’re the best boy.” She thought of one of her values: present. For the first time in months, she felt centered, totally aligned. She knew she’d fail—it was inevitable—but this was a good start.

No, it was a great start.
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I’m grateful to Stacy Ennis for her partnership on this book. You have been wonderful to collaborate with and your contributions have been vital to telling this story. I admire your writing skills and the way you live your life, and I’m better because of knowing and working with you.

One of my best advisors over the past decade has been Maryanna Young of Aloha Publishing. Thank you, Maryanna, for helping me understand the publishing industry better and for supporting all of my writing adventures.

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The team at Price Associates and our clients continue to inspire me to get better. It was their encouragement that convinced me the time had come to tell this story after years of sharing these ideas with leaders in many countries. I’m particularly grateful to Andy Johnson for convincing me we had something to share and to Nichole MacDowell for her tireless contributions as our director of communications and PR.
Finally, I’m immeasurably grateful to my wife, Pam. She has been patient, caring, and supportive beyond anything I deserve. Thank you for letting me follow my passion and for all the sacrifices you have made so I can share my ideas around the world.

—Ron

Writing this book with Ron Price has been one of the most meaningful experiences of my career. Much in the way Emily learns from David, I got the opportunity to sit with Ron for days, drinking tea with him in his office, asking questions, and listening. Ron, I’ve grown as a leader and writer, with a stronger commitment to my values and greater awareness of my impact on those around me. Thank you for your investment in this process. And thanks, Pam Price, for the delicious tea.

The team at Greenleaf Book Group, mentioned earlier by Ron, has been a joy to work with from start to finish. Emilie Lyons opened the door for this book to happen, and I’m truly grateful to her. To the entire team, thanks for believing in our book.

There are several people who invested significant time and energy into reviewing the manuscript: Brent Patmos, Alecia Hoobing, Jennifer Belt, Mindy Bortness, Dorien Derksen, and Nichole MacDowell. Each of you played a significant part in shaping the content. Donna Cook and Frieda Johnson both served important roles in the editorial process. Thank you all.

And finally, to my husband, Doug, and my kids, Lily and Max, thank you for inspiring scenes in the book and supporting me as I holed up in my office to finish drafts. You three fill me up. I love you.

—Stacy
Resources

For more information and resources from the book, including chapter notes, a full values list, and more from the authors, visit www.price-associates.com/growinginfluence.

More titles by these authors:
1. Did you enjoy the story of *Growing Influence*? Would the story have been more or less impactful if it was written as nonfiction?

2. What are the most valuable insights you gained from this book? Why are they important to you?

3. Were you able to connect or relate to any of the characters? If so, who and why?

4. How did the book affect you personally? Did reading it help you focus more on professional growth? Did it inspire you to reflect on the kind of leader you want to be in the future?

5. Do you experience frustration in your career? Do you think the lessons in this book could help overcome these frustrations and obstacles?

6. What tools from this book will you implement in your life to improve your career?

7. What are the five values by which you govern yourself? What
are the five values by which you relate to others? How well do you think you live by your values?

8. What does the ability to influence mean to you? What about integrity?

9. There are three areas of influence: control, collaboration, and concern. What examples of the areas of influence do you see in your life, and how can you grow within these areas?

10. Since the lessons in this book apply to everyone, how do you think having a woman as the protagonist impacted the story?

11. How are the three different types of leadership—character, expert, and positional—present in your life and work? What areas of leadership can you improve in?
1. What compelled you to write this book? What inspired you to write it as fiction instead of nonfiction?

**Ron Price (RP):** I have spoken on the topics in the book for several years. One of our team members, Andy Johnson, kept encouraging me to write a book about these concepts because he felt they were original and impactful. As I reflected on this, I concluded that the models of leadership would be better communicated through a work of fiction. Originally, I asked Stacy to serve as the executive editor/ghostwriter. It quickly became obvious to me that she should be credited as a coauthor. This book could not have been completed without her valuable and original contributions.

**Stacy Ennis (SE):** I’ve worked on a number of leadership books over the years, all of which have been meaningful. However, I’d never worked on fiction within the genre of business and leadership, and the idea was both exciting and challenging. One of the things I enjoyed about writing this story with Ron was pushing ourselves to explore a new way to communicate leadership lessons that can profoundly affect people’s lives and careers. Developing the story with Ron stretched my creativity and helped me grow as a leader, and I can’t wait to see the impact it has on others.
2. Did you discover anything new in the process of writing this story?

RP: We always discover new things through the process of writing! We decided early on that framing our leadership insights within the context of gender bias would be valuable. Then the #metoo movement happened and elevated the importance of what we were doing.

SE: I agree with Ron—we learned a lot about the content and characters, and we also saw the importance of the story play out in the media as we were writing the book. But more than that, I learned the power of conversation around leadership as Ron and I dug deep into the concepts of the book. We recorded hours of discussions as we teased out ideas and explored different pathways for interpretation and implementation by readers.

3. What was the most rewarding experience throughout your book-writing journey? What has been the most important or beneficial lesson you have learned?

RP: Collaborating with Stacy has been a very rewarding experience for me. She is an extremely skillful writer and represents a set of experiences I value but will never have myself. Though we come from very different backgrounds, we share many values. Once again, I have been reminded of how little I can do alone and how much better my writing projects are when I collaborate with talented people.
SE: Working with Ron on this book taught me what it looks like when you bring two perspectives together to create something bigger than we could create on our own. Ron is one of the most values-driven, ethical, hard-working leaders I know, and he’s also a great listener. As we watched the #metoo movement unfold alongside revising this book, we had great conversations about what it means to be a woman in business. He modeled empathy and understanding, which I strive to bring into my own leadership.

4. What were the biggest challenges you faced cowriting a book? What were the biggest rewards?

RP: Scheduling was our only real challenge. I am extremely busy with our work, including traveling up to 70 percent of the time. Working on the book took place after normal business hours. Stacy was patient and responsive throughout the process. The biggest rewards are seeing a result that neither of us could have created alone. Participating in the creative process is always one of my greatest joys. In my opinion, writing fiction with purpose is a delicate venture, and I’m thrilled with OUR end result.

SE: Ron’s response makes me smile, because he was extremely on top of revisions—truly an ideal coauthor! As someone who writes around two and a half books a year, the greatest challenge was stepping outside of my normal nonfiction process to work with Ron in creating Emily’s and David’s characters and
telling their stories. The biggest reward? Even after all these rounds of revision, I still tear up when I read the last chapter. To me, we did the story and content justice.

5. **What makes your book unique from other books on leadership?**

**RP:** The models we write about are unique to us, and they have been tested and validated for more than forty years. They are an extension of the work we do understanding and encouraging leadership excellence.

**SE:** I’ll echo Ron, though the leadership lessons are his. I helped refine and expand them, but they are concepts he’s developed over decades. Our book is also unique because it brings together two voices from different backgrounds and life experiences to tell a single story, which will allow a wide spectrum of readers to be able to connect to the characters and lessons.

6. **The lessons that David shares in the book, where did they come from? Were they lessons you learned through your own careers, saw through others’ careers, or researched?**

**RP:** David’s lessons come mostly from my experiences and work with other leaders—much of the book is autobiographical. There are also several special touches I am thrilled with from Stacy’s experiences.
SE: Ron’s stories are present throughout the book. You’ll see some of my life through Emily’s experience, especially when it comes to her parenting. Some of the discussions Ron and I have had also made it into the book through David and Emily.

7. **What would you say is the most important message or lesson to take away from *Growing Influence*? Why?**

RP: If I had to narrow it down to one message, it is that everyone is a leader, and their influence is made up of a combination of character, expertise, and position. Intentional leaders think about building integrity in all three dimensions based on their individual passions and purpose.

SE: I’ll add one thing to Ron’s response: all leaders have the opportunity for growth, no matter their current situations. The message of intentionality extends to the decision to grow.

8. **Is there anything else either of you wanted to include in this book that you may have not had the chance to?**

RP: This book captured everything I was hoping it would. Because this is an extension of earlier books (*The Innovator’s Advantage*, *The Complete Leader*, and *Treasure Inside*), I view it as part of my journey reflecting on leadership. There may be one or two more books in the future to complete my sense of responsibility in sharing these reflections with others. There are so many wonderful books about leadership, it is impossible
to acknowledge all of the authors I admire and benefit from reading. That said, our team members at Price Associates have authored several books that are near the top of my list (http://price-associates.com/store).

**SE:** As a writer, I would love to explore a more complex version of this story. Since this is a business fable, we made intentional choices to keep the story in support of the lessons.

9. **What are your plans for the future? Will you write another book?**

**RP:** I hope to write at least two more. I have spent the last five or seven years working on content through speeches and conversations with leaders that I hope to use as the basis for my future writing. I have been working on a new approach to strategy, developing practical keys to effective supervision, and using value theory (axiology) as a management practice. I hope that I can eventually craft my thinking around these topics into books that benefit others.

**SE:** One thing I’m especially excited about is a women’s leadership platform training I cofounded with three other incredible women (http://nextlevelwomenleaders.com). As for writing another book, my answer is *definitely.* I’ve been writing regularly since grade school, and I don’t plan to stop writing anytime soon. I also look forward to publishing more books under my name, as many are ghostwritten.
10. Do you identify with any of the characters? If so, who and why?

**RP:** Both David and Emily! I probably identify more with David because much of his story is my story in disguise. However, Emily’s experience also has autobiographical aspects as well.

**SE:** I identify with both characters as well, though probably more so Emily. As a mom of two young children, her challenges balancing family with career certainly resonate with me. My husband is also an all-in father and constant support to me, much like Emily’s husband, Jason.

11. What kind of research did you do for this book?

**RP:** Over forty years of reading thousands of books, then implementing what I was learning in my experiences, and finally working with scores of emerging leaders as an executive coach and program facilitator. Because I develop my thinking about a topic for at least five years, my research happens along the journey much more than during the writing process.

**SE:** I love research and spent a lot of time listening to podcasts about women in business, leadership, and more, as well as reading articles and books. Like Ron, I’m an avid reader and have spent more than a decade refining my thinking around the concepts we explore in the book.
About the Authors

**Ron Price** is an internationally recognized business advisor, executive coach, speaker, and author. Known for his creative and systematic thinking, business versatility, and practical optimism, Ron has worked in fifteen countries and served in almost every level of executive management over the past forty years. As the former president of a multi-million-dollar international company, Ron works shoulder-to-shoulder with executive leadership teams to bring strategic clarity and transformational results to organizations. In 2004, Ron started Price Associates, and he serves as president and CEO of the global leadership advisory firm that focuses on helping organizations grow in the areas of leadership, innovation, and culture. Ron is also the creator of The Complete Leader Program, an EMBA-style learning experience that has been used by organizations around the world to grow leadership skills and character. Learn more at www.price-associates.com.

**Stacy Ennis** is a creative consultant, success coach, speaker, and writer, as well as the cofounder of Next Level Women Leaders, a leadership training company. Her background includes leading as the former executive editor of *Healthy Living Made Simple*, a Sam’s Club magazine that reaches around 11 million readers, as well as serving as the longtime ghostwriter for a Nobel Prize...
winner in medicine. Stacy has written or edited dozens of books, including her own book, *The Editor’s Eye* (Night Owls Press, 2013). Her TEDx talk, *How to Raise Brave Kids*, has been viewed thousands of times by people across the world. She has a master’s degree in professional writing and editing from the University of Cincinnati and a bachelor’s degree in writing from Boise State University. Learn more at www.stacyennis.com.