



# The Leadership Platform

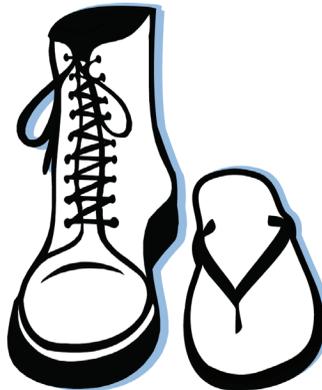
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## Plank 4

*“Balance Thought and Action”*

*excerpted from*

***The Leadership Platform: A Practical Guide to Building a Strong and Effective Leadership Foundation***, available at <http://tinyurl.com/LeadershipPlatform>



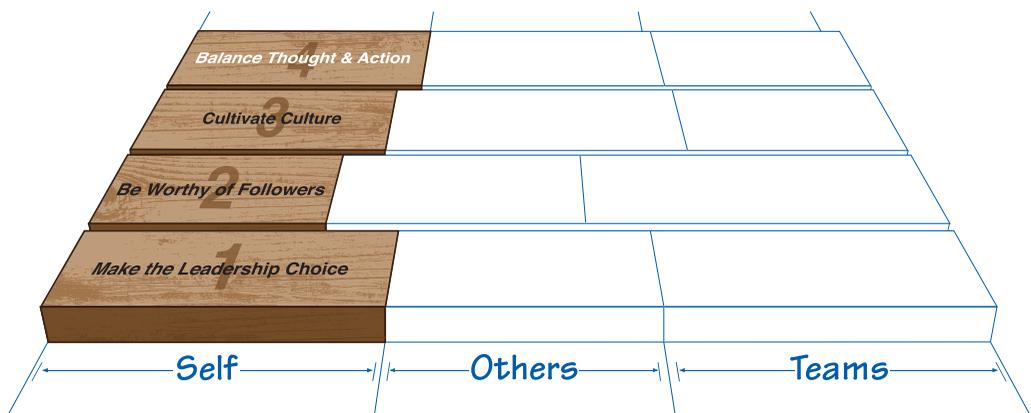
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# Plank 4

## Balance Thought and Action

My intentions are the intentions of a leader, and I spend my time accordingly



*Adam had just been named “Employee of the Year” at Sensol Manufacturing.*

*A day-shift supervisor in the manufacturing plant, Adam was admired for his quick intelligence, his strong work ethic, and his fairness to all employees. His team appreciated that when they needed an answer, he was always there with the right one.*

*Each morning, Adam grabbed the production planning documents and headed to the floor to make sure the day’s quotas were met. These varied a bit – sometimes there was a rush order, occasionally a more efficient piece of equipment would boost productivity for the long term – but all in all, the quotas were pretty consistent. Adam had earned the nickname “Hundred-Unit Harry” for his team’s ability to produce 100 units on nearly every shift.*

*Each day, dozens of little challenges came up and dozens were resolved. Adam moved quickly from one issue, one conversation, and one task to the next.*

*Adam loved his job. He’d worked for Sensol for seven years and still left the plant nearly every day with the satisfaction of a job well done. A good manager, Adam had learned, was a guy who knew his stuff, who rolled up his sleeves and got busy, who overcame the day-to-day challenges through sheer force of will and the ability to “work the system.” Sometimes the methods Adam used weren’t all that... graceful. He carried a hammer on his tool belt, and at times he found that balky equipment responded to a little “encouragement” from it.*

*Adam’s team had high morale. They enjoyed the consistent achievement of the 100-unit goal – it united them, gave them a sense of camaraderie. Led by Adam’s good example, they would do “whatever it took,” including staying late, pitching in when others needed help, or taking up the slack when a teammate was sick or on vacation.*

**“You’re the glue that keeps the team together. We can’t risk having you off the floor working on strategic planning.”**

*Several months after Adam received his “Employee of the Year” award at the annual banquet, he was called from the floor to attend a meeting with the other plant supervisors. Even the night shift folks had been called in, so Adam knew something was up. Sure enough, the company’s VP of Operations walked into the room and delivered a startling message.*

*The company's #1 customer had received a lower bid from Sensol's biggest competitor. Unless Sensol could respond, it would lose the account – with devastating consequences. The bid was almost 20% less than what Sensol had been charging. "Obviously," the VP said, "our only recourse is to boost our production rates by 20% – without increasing costs."*

*Adam was a bit stunned – he'd have to figure out a way to produce 120 units a day.*

*He decided to call on his trademark "winning attitude" and take a positive approach with his team. Calling them together for a brief stand-up meeting, he shared the news and asked them all to make a commitment to the new production goal. He hinted at serious consequences if the goals weren't met and told them he'd do everything in his power to help them. For the most part, though, Adam stayed positive. He pictured himself as the motivational coach in the locker room, exhorting his team to give "120%" to win the game in the second half.*

*Every day over the next few weeks, Adam's team met the new production quota. To do so, he canceled all training sessions and assigned maintenance staff to the production line two to three hours a day. Performance reviews piled up, but no one asked Adam to explain. He kept smiling, kept working hard, kept giving 120%. Adam felt more important and more valued than ever before.*

*Then problems began stacking up. Adam's patience started to erode, and he noticed his frustrations growing. He started noticing how many things were left undone at the end of his shift. He watched equipment efficiency decline, and he noticed small quality issues slipping through the cracks. These things annoyed him, but he didn't have time to deal with them – his team needed every hand on the production line.*

*After achieving the 120-unit goal every day for almost a month, a glitch in the supply chain resulted in a one-day production of only 92 units. There was nothing Adam could have done to prevent the shortage. Arriving early the next morning, Adam picked up the production schedule and noted incredulously that his shift was expected to produce 148 units to make up for the previous day's shortfall.*

*Adam marched into the plant manager's office, flashed the production schedule and opened with a volley. "We've never come close to 148 units in one shift!"*

*The plant manager looked at him and smiled. "Adam, you're the man. You've always figured out a way. I have confidence you'll meet this goal."*

*Adam returned to the plant floor and took a quick walk to blow off steam. As the employees started filing in, he told each of them they were going to need to “kick ass to get 148 units out the door” that day.*

*An hour later, one of the two production lines was down – a conveyor belt had broken. No one knew whether a replacement part was available. The one person who knew how to repair the conveyor was out that day, and because trainings had been postponed, no one had been cross-trained to fix it.*

*Adam had been concerned about this conveyor for months but hadn't had time to research alternatives or entertain bids. The plant manager had told him to look into it, but this issue had taken a back seat to the urgent short-term production requirements.*

*A few weeks earlier, the line foreman had suggested that the conveyor system could be eliminated altogether with some tweaking of the production line. Adam was intrigued. He had set a time with the foreman to discuss the idea, but twice emergencies had come up, and the brainstorming session had been postponed.*

*Still hopeful of hitting the magic number 148, Adam mobilized a fire line of employees to grab the products at one end of the defective conveyor line and carry them one by one to the other end. Meanwhile, he tried to figure out how to patch up the conveyor until it could be fixed. He even took a few swings of his hammer. He only succeeded in denting the equipment and making a lot of noise.*

*Shortly after lunch, he and the line supervisor took stock of the situation. The employees on the fire line were exhausted. And they were only falling further and further behind the production goal.*

*Adam's line supervisor grabbed him by the shoulders. “This company is asking too much of you,” he said. “You've always done what they asked, but this is just crazy.”*

*Adam looked down at his sweat-stained shirt and felt the soreness in his head and his hands. He took a look around and breathed a heavy sigh. “I guess there's just no way we'll work our way through this one.” He felt the burden of defeat.*

*The next day Adam noticed his plant manager in conference with some of his peers. They were drawing rough diagrams of new plant layouts. Flip chart pages taped to the wall were labeled “Training,” “Processes,” “Equipment Upgrades,” and “Cost Reductions.”*

*As he attended to his usual duties on the floor, Adam wondered about what he'd seen. Later, he found an excuse to pass by the plant manager's office. He poked his head in and asked, “How did the meeting go this morning?”*

*The plant manager looked up at him. “It went pretty well, but we have a lot of work to do.”*

*“How can I help?” Adam asked.*

*“You can do what you’ve always done,” the plant manager said. “Keep things together out there on the floor while we address these longer-term issues. You’re the glue that keeps the team together. We can’t risk having you off the floor working on strategic planning.”*

*For a moment, Adam was proud of being “the glue.” But as he walked away, he wondered how proud he should be. What would result from this strategic planning? After years of being a good soldier, what would be his future role? He walked to his office, sat down heavily, and plopped his feet on the desk. As he gazed absently at his well-worn work boots, he felt a sense of powerlessness, and for the first time, a strong concern about his future at Sensol.*



## **Boot & Sandal**

On our leadership journey so far, we’ve made the choice to lead (Plank 1), we’ve determined the importance of character in attracting followers (Plank 2), and we’ve considered the influence of culture – patterns of values, beliefs and norms – in shaping how we and our organizations think and deal with change (Plank 3).

Now we get to the matter of how we spend our time. And “spend” is the operative word here, because time is your most important – and ultimately, in the metaphysical sense, your only – asset. Face it: when you’re gone, the measure of your life will be how you spent your time.

Your growing platform needs another plank. To nail it in, you must acknowledge the tension between your tactical or everyday activities, and the need to step out of the flow so you can plan, organize, and develop. For the majority of managers,

the tactical easily wins this battle: the urgent, as someone once said, is always getting in the way of the important. But the successful leader balances what needs to be done today with what needs to be done to prepare for tomorrow.

We depict these two aspects of our work with a pair of images: *the boot*, representing the active work of today, and *the sandal*, representing the reflective work that engages our higher thinking in pursuit of our vision for tomorrow.

*My intentions are the intentions of a leader, and I spend my time accordingly.*

This implies you have to take the time to create intentions. So what are the intentions of a leader? Well, they're not just to survive or to process the next transaction. The intentions of a *manager* are to insure the successful day-to-day operation of the enterprise. The intentions of a *leader* are out there – over the horizon – in the future.

If your intentions are those of a leader, you'll have to spend time in "sandal" activities:

- *Planning and Strategizing*: Making sure your organization's position in the marketplace (or in the larger organization) stays viable, flexible, dynamic, and resilient, and offers opportunities for growth.
- *Analyzing*: Looking for trends and information that give you an overview of what's going on beyond today's transactions.
- *Studying*: Increasing your capacity, and the capacity of others, to do more effective work and produce greater outcomes.
- *Relationship Building*: Reaching out to develop a network of people who can help achieve the vision.
- *Developing*: Teaching, coaching, and mentoring, as well as designing and implementing training and development systems that insure the consistent nurturance of quality employees and other leaders.
- *Communicating*: Framing and delivering the visionary messages, clarifying direction, keeping people focused on the long term, and articulating compelling reasons for others to do their best.

All these activities lead us to big-picture thinking – a hallmark of effective leaders. *Where are we going? What do I need to know to chart a course? What's happening now that informs our journey? Who will accompany me on this journey? How will I communicate where we're headed and how to get there? How do I enrich, encourage, and stimulate my team to make a positive impact on their lives and the lives of others?*

Look carefully at the bulleted list above. Did you spend any appreciable time on these activities this month? This week? This afternoon? If you're like most business people, you probably spent precious little time on them. Instead, your time was likely spent on administrative trivia, deadlines, and putting out fires.

No one, not even the most senior executive, gets to spend her entire day on "sandal" activities. But every job above entry level should be a combination of both types of work.

### **Examples of boot activities, or active work**



- taking customer calls
- answering questions or giving short-term guidance
- composing emails and making phone calls on logistical issues
- conducting tactical meetings
- driving, moving products, cleaning, organizing – physical work
- completing repetitive paperwork: invoices, compliance documents, filing, etc.
- gathering price quotes and conducting routine sales work

### **Examples of sandal activities, or reflective work**



- engaging in an off-site long-range planning session
- reading a business-related book, article, or trade magazine
- taking a business-related course or seminar
- analyzing metrics or financial reports and looking for trends and patterns
- dialoguing about planning or strategic issues
- observing and inquiring into the work of others; seeking ways to improve operations
- developing new processes and training systems
- writing performance reviews, coaching, mentoring

Reviewing the lists above, most of us would say, "It would be nice to get more time for reflection, but there's just too much to get done." We understand the value of sandal work but we tend not to spend much time doing it. Why? Let's start with the least obvious, most controversial reason – we may not really want to *do* the sandal work.

American business culture biases us strongly toward action. How often have you heard some variation of the phrase "just git-'er-done"? It's ingrained in us that success is a function of how hard we work and how badly we "want it." In many

organizations, people are rewarded for doing what I call “heroic” work: stubbornly plowing ahead, boots a-blazin’, to meet the needs of customers, bosses and co-workers despite all obstacles.

Truth be told, we often enjoy being the hero: that knowledgeable, experienced, capable person who, despite all obstacles, leaps a tall building in a single bound to get the work done. Remember Adam, the character in our opening story? He tried to expand output solely through commitment and hard work, and when it worked, he felt valued.

Active work is quite simply more seductive than reflective work – especially for “working managers” who have a lot of tactical responsibilities. Why?

Active work provides immediate gratification. At the end of the day, you look back with satisfaction to a stack of papers processed, a quota of products produced, or a list of phone calls made. Even though the work may be physically taxing, require a lot of time or energy, and involve challenges, seeing the results feels good – the same way it feels good to have finished washing the dishes, changing the oil, or balancing the checkbook.

Reflective work, on the other hand, offers delayed gratification at best. People promoted to positions requiring more reflective work often complain about leaving work feeling like they didn’t accomplish anything. They may, in fact, have accomplished a great deal, but the payoff for their work might not come for weeks, months, or even years.

The pursuit of immediate gratification – doing what’s expedient and pleasurable instead of what really needs to be done – is an epidemic in our culture. It underlies not just our work habits, but many destructive personal and societal habits as well. The choice between dashing off a few emails and completing that overdue performance evaluation isn’t so different from deciding between ice cream and fresh carrots, or between exercise and a hot bath. Dealing with delayed gratification requires patience, intellectual discipline, and a big-picture focus.

Active work is also appealing because it typically involves the use of previously acquired skills or knowledge – work we already know how to do, work we feel competent doing. When we reflect, plan, or strategize, on the other hand, we’re creating new pathways of thought, which involves a steep learning curve. Climbing that learning curve isn’t always fun.

For the above reasons, reflective work is in many ways harder than active work. There’s a physiological component to this as well. Have you ever wondered why you’re so exhausted after an all-day meeting? (“I didn’t do a thing; I just sat there. Why am I so tired?”) The brain consumes an enormous percentage of the body’s energy and oxygen when it’s learning something new or pondering something complex. At some level, we are taking this into account when we’re avoiding a challenging cognitive activity.

Ironically, despite all of this, many of us simply don't see reflective work as "work." My clients often wrap up coaching sessions or strategic planning meetings by saying, "Okay, now I need to get back to work." This betrays a prejudice against reflective work. Many of us feel guilty if we aren't engaged in short-term, tactical activities. Leaders who come up through the ranks often feel disloyal to their hard-working line employees if they spend an afternoon in planning or analysis. It's too easy in our culture to equate activity with effectiveness. Yet how many of us would call Chicken Little "effective"?

So maybe you've been deluding yourself. Maybe you've been putting off important reflective work not because you truly don't have time for it, but because deep down you know it involves a taxing level of concentration, challenge and effort that you would rather not muster. Carving out time to do the important, long-range reflective work is thus a matter of hard choices and discipline. It's more than just trying to cut through the usual "busyness." It's about resisting the strong cultural and personal bias and the habits that draw us toward active work. As a leader you must recognize these dynamics and acknowledge this very important fact:

*If you wait until you have time to do the reflective work, it will never get done. The amount of active work waiting to be done will always expand (with your passive acceptance and assistance) to fill the available time.*

## **Why is it so important to balance boot and sandal work?**

Like our friend Adam, the leader who does not balance thought and action is doomed to rely on heroism – continually trying to force his way through problems rather than thinking his way into opportunities for growth.

When you're wearing your work boots, you're operating in experience mode. While you may be quite competent in this mode, you risk becoming stale – failing to grow.

When you're wearing your sandals, you're operating in learning mode, or growth mode. This is where you have your greatest impact as a leader. It's where you tap your deep well of creativity, where you foster dynamic growth. It's what leads you ultimately to outperform your competition.

If you're not in balance – if the vast majority of your work is active, "boot" work – you may be a significant tactical contributor, but you won't elevate your team or organization to the next level.

And you won't elevate *yourself* to the next level either. By being the "hero," Adam got labeled by his superiors as a doer and not a thinker. When the time came to solve the systemic problems, he was left out of the loop. He had excluded himself from the higher levels of problem solving by being essential as a "boot" worker.

The organization was unwilling to pull him from the manufacturing floor because he had perpetuated a system in which heroic individual behavior was necessary to the day-to-day operation.

I'm not trying to paint an unrealistic picture here. I'm not suggesting you can always find a quiet place to retreat to where you do nothing but think and create. What's more important – and more practical – is seeing boot work and sandal work as concurrent.

Every day we're confronted with problems to solve. Do you solve them temporarily or permanently? When you solve them temporarily, you probably provide a solution based on your experience – or by simply doing the "boot" work yourself. Of course many problems do require immediate action. But in the process of solving each problem, do you explore whether it has a deeper cause – a more systemic source – and do you plan to take "sandal" action on *that*? Do you offer someone a fish, or do you teach someone how to fish?

When we segregate boot and sandal work, we fail to engage consistently with critical long-term issues. Management retreats are great, but they only happen once in a while. The best leaders do the work while they ponder how to do it better.

## **So how do we begin to think like the best leaders?**

- *Prioritize* sandal activities in concrete ways. Schedule time for them weekly, if not daily. (We'll offer strategies later in the chapter.) Don't wait until they're convenient for others, or until the rare window opens up between events. Have the courage to put boot activities aside for the sake of a longer view – the leader's view.
- *Define* the benefits of specific reflective work carefully to yourself and others. If you feel that taking a particular class or engaging in a team-building activity is important, cite the impact you expect it to have on you and your team. This can help justify the time spent and get the support of others to make that time available.
- *Sustain* the effort over the time required. Most sandal activities are not one-time efforts.
- *Delegate* your boot work to others – never as easy as it sounds. More about this, too, later in the chapter.
- *Use a coaching approach*, whenever possible. When you are overseeing or participating in tactical activity, question whether you are coaching or directing. Directing others to complete work is a boot activity. Coaching is simultaneously a boot and sandal activity – achieving immediate outcomes (boot) while offering people tools to solve problems on their own (sandal).

- *Offer questions instead of answers.* A leader who has all the answers is not growing and not helping others grow. And a leader who thinks he has all the answers is deluding himself for the sake of his own unhealthy ego.
- *Imagine!* In Plank 1, we talked about leaders as visionaries – people who regularly look over the horizon and live in the world of possibilities. If you’re content to live in the day-to-day status quo – to exist in work-boot mode all the time – you aren’t thinking like a leader. If you are thinking like a leader, you’ll find the constant pull of tactical work to be a barrier to your broader ambitions. Exercise your visionary capacities. That’s sandal work.

## Becoming a Process Thinker

We’ll talk more in Plank 11 (“Develop a Process View”) about the role of process thinking in the leader’s mind, but let’s give it a little preview here.

The work that an organization accomplishes is the result of processes that have been established to do the work. These processes may be inconsistent from department to department, they may be poorly defined and documented, and they may not be well measured or managed. But there is a process to all work, good or bad.

I’ve found one of the hallmarks of effective leaders is the habit of seeing this connection – that all work outputs are the result of the quality of the processes employed to produce them. If you can learn to see all the tactical occurrences that consume your time as *outputs of processes*, then you’ll become more oriented toward fixing processes than toward fixing immediate problems.

### **Making It Real** *Overcoming Process Inertia*

Look hard for a process directly within your sphere of influence that you have followed and never questioned to this point. Focusing on all the direct and indirect influences and on why that process is handled the way it’s handled, ask “what if?”

See if you can, by engaging your reflective mind, find a way to accomplish the work that would quantifiably improve performance and productivity. Document the details, estimate the time and/or financial benefit that might be achieved, and share the proposed new process and the expected benefits with your team. Then modify the approach as needed based on the team’s input.

When a time sensitive event such as a production snafu, a botched order, or even the sudden departure of an employee occurs, the process-oriented leader looks to solve not only the short-term cause of the problem (the machine broke down), but also considers the possible systemic issues related to the event (we have yet to establish a dependable routine maintenance procedure) and finds time to work on that as well.

In the end, process limitations led to Adam's downfall, defeating even his best intentions and his hardest work.

## **Strategies for sandal time management**

The barriers to creative, progressive, proactive thinking are not only the psychological ones described above. They're systemic and institutional as well. So a big part of the challenge is *time management*. Remember that your intentions are the intentions of a leader and you spend your time accordingly. So let's discuss some practical ideas for creating a balance between thought and action.

### 1. Use a prioritized to-do list every day.

- It continues to surprise me how many managers fail to maintain this discipline (perhaps because it's a sandal discipline!). Sadly, it explains how a lot of managers approach their work – reactively, rather than proactively. In other words, constantly playing defense rather than offense. To not work from a prioritized to-do list implies you don't see your time as intentional – that you actually expect to get swept along by events.
- While many managers do keep to-do lists, not many prioritize them – which also leads to reactivity. If your goal is to simply get things done and cross them off, you're not being intentional enough with your time. Use a simple priority A, B, or C classification.
- Your to-do list should include dates for all your activities. Don't list them all for today! A to-do list can be intimidating and demoralizing because it reminds us how many things are not yet done. Dating the activities can reduce stress by putting out of your mind those items that can wait until tomorrow, or next week, or even next year.
- Now that you've got an effectively prioritized list (and congratulations for taking the sandal time to maintain your list!), look at the things to which you've assigned high priority. How many of them are sandal activities? How many reflect the intentions of a leader? Or are they all tactical, work-boot activities?

## 2. Keep a disciplined calendar.

- Prioritizing your to-do list and including sandal items is a great start – and it's not enough. Keep a calendar and block time for sandal activities on it. Again, I'm surprised how many managers try to work through their day without a good calendar discipline. This is especially dangerous in shared-calendar environments such as Microsoft Outlook®, where others can schedule your time. If you haven't proactively blocked out time to learn, strategize, or develop, you will find your time hijacked by less important meetings and activities. You won't be spending your time with the intentions of a leader.
- Many managers spend the regular work-day in survival mode, reserving sandal activities for evenings or weekends. Certainly projects requiring deep reflection are best undertaken when things are "quiet." But it's too easy to fall into the pattern of avoiding all sandal time during the work day. Once you're in this habit, it's difficult to break it.

## 3. Extend your planning calendar.

- Do you schedule activities more than a few days or weeks into the future? If you extend your planning calendar several months out – and perhaps even a year or more – you'll be less likely to get trapped in the tactical world, and more likely to stay focused on sandal activities.

## 4. Use your action bias to divide larger projects into smaller tasks.

- It's daunting to see an entry on your to-do list that says "complete performance reviews" – when ten of them need to be done, and each review has six steps. Better to list ten different reviews with ten different dates, and schedule time for each of the steps. This breaks down the larger task, making it less intimidating and increasing the likelihood you'll get a good feeling from at least getting started.
- Project management can help here too. Sometimes a large project, such as training your staff on a new procedure, deserves a separate project planning document. But the individual tasks from that larger project may want to get transferred to your to-do list – such as "secure a meeting room," or "complete training module #1," or "finalize training personnel list and distribute announcement for first class."
- What we're talking about here is deceptively simple. You'll feel like you're solving problems, but you're simultaneously moving the organization forward strategically, step by tactical step.

5. Turn your wish lists into actionable plans.

- Most of us find ourselves saying “someday,” or “when I get time.” We know in our hearts this often means “never.” So when you find yourself using “wishing language,” turn that language into actionable plans and steps. Nothing is more demoralizing than compiling a mental list of goals and then regretting that you never got around to taking action on any of them. After all, as we noted in Plank 2, one characteristic that makes you “follower-worthy” is following through on your commitments – even those you make to yourself. Otherwise you’re out of integrity. And the leader who loses integrity loses followers. Talk is cheap; if you create intentions, make good on them.

6. Delegate tasks not appropriate for your level.

- Failure to delegate keeps us in boot mode. Five reasons for not delegating have direct implication for the boot/sandal balance:
  - a. We fail to delegate because we’ve failed to hire, develop, and train quality employees.
  - b. We fail to delegate because we’ve failed to produce documented and repeatable processes for our employees.
  - c. We fail to delegate because we’ve failed to provide our employees with the equipment or technology they need.
  - d. We fail to delegate because we’re too emotionally invested in our role as “doers” and “heroes.” We secretly don’t want to offload work because it may take away our sense of accomplishment – our pride in being the “go-to person.”
  - e. We fail to delegate because it would free us to face the sandal work, which we’re avoiding because it’s... harder.
- The first three above are failures of the system, but the system becomes less efficient when managers are overbalanced with boot activities. An insidious reinforcing loop occurs: you don’t delegate because you haven’t taken the time to train employees or develop processes or upgrade equipment; as a result you perform more and more heroic work and spend less and less time fixing these systemic issues that drove the work back to you in the first place.
- Here’s a simple way to evaluate how well you’re delegating, as well as how well the system supports the work that needs doing. List the tasks you currently perform in one of the following three columns:

| Only I Can Perform | Others Could Do | Others Could Do<br>if properly trained or if<br>the system were modified |
|--------------------|-----------------|--|
|                    |                 |  |
|                    |                 |  |
|                    |                 |  |
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- If you are honest in producing this table, you'll probably see that you could delegate much more than you do, and that the system is driving work back up the hierarchy.
- A good rule of thumb is that all work should be given to the lowest level employee capable of performing that work efficiently. This means not only are you running a lean organization, but lower-level employees are being challenged with opportunities to learn and apply new skills.

### **Making It Real**

#### *How Do You Spend Your Time?*

Keep a diary of your activities for a full week, then slot each of the activities into one of the three columns in the form above. Journal the implications for needed delegation and training. Also discuss ways in which external influences *and* your own internal habits, inclinations, fears, desires, comfort level, etc. may be keeping you in "fire-fighting" mode, or keeping you from optimally delegating.

Commit to a small number of action steps for the coming weeks in order to implement some of your ideas. Schedule these action items into your calendar.

Achieving a balance between boot and sandal – between action and reflection, between strategic and tactical – is one of the most consequential challenges facing a leader.

It takes courage to recognize that when we get trapped in tactical mode, the trap is often of our own making. It takes patience, persistence, vision, and time to lead the charge for systemic change when necessary. But the alternative – staying in inefficient tactical mode – is the most vicious of vicious cycles. The result can threaten the competitiveness, and thus the very survival, of any business.

Extraordinary will and mental discipline are required to keep your sandals on despite the urgency and attraction of boot activities. If you believe you can work your way to success, you're only partly right. It depends on what you call work. It depends on how much time you spend on activities linked to planning, learning and development for you and your team.

### **Making It Real**

#### *Understanding Your Role as a Leader*

Rewrite your job description. Don't describe what you do, but rather describe the critical strategic objectives your position is or should be accountable for achieving.

Then do a thorough comparison between what you tactically do in an average week and what your strategic job description should call for.

Finally, make a plan for transitioning some of your regular activities so that they become more aligned with your strategic job description.