



**Practical Principles  
of Personal Achievement**

**PURSUIT OF  
PERSONAL  
LEADERSHIP**

**DR. DELE OLA**

**#1 Award-Winning Author of *Be A Change Agent***

# Pursuit of Personal Leadership

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PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES  
OF PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Dr. Dele Ola

The Prowezz Company

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he subject of personal leadership, as I present it in this book, is an uncommon theme in mainstream leadership literature. I wrote this book based on the fundamental belief that all human beings share common humanity, but each person has unique hidden abilities that each individual must discover and exploit to live a successful and fulfilling life.

Simply put, the pursuit of personal leadership is using one's latent gifts, talents, and abilities to attain great personal achievement—and more if you so desire. Personal leadership is determining and developing your personal attributes to intentionally direct the course of your life and take responsibility for achieving success in your life. As a matter of principle, the world must make room for a person who has discovered, and has the desire and determination, to develop and exploit their gifts, talents, and abilities to establish themselves in what they have determined to be their exact purpose and calling in life.

Pursuit of personal leadership is a subject we do not learn at school. No number of academic degrees or certificates can substitute for the principles discussed in this book. No amount of soft skills, hard work, or access to physical or financial resources can replace the principles either. Becoming a person of significance—a person who makes strides, stands out, and changes the world—is no walk in the park. The principles of personal achievement are simple and straightforward but require intention, action, and personal courage to follow.

The truth is that nothing of significant value can be acquired at no cost. If something costs you nothing, it was either paid for

by someone else or is worthless. Most successful people currently and historically succeeded because they diligently studied at the real school of life: the constant and unrelenting pursuit of personal leadership.

Developing your personal leadership will help you live life to its fullest. The reason we are here on this earth is to make impacts by manifesting our gifts and abilities and to contribute our share to the expansive task of governing and improving humanity. Everyone deserves the opportunity for self-expression and the fulfillment of purpose in this world.

But between discovering one's purpose and fulfilling it are the deliberate choices we make in directing the trajectory of our lives. *We do not become whom life makes us become. We become whom we choose to become.* Those who understand and constantly follow the principles of personal achievement, who are in pursuit of personal leadership, make headway in life. Study the principles in this book, continuously and relentlessly pursue personal leadership, and you will certainly achieve personal greatness and success.

# CHAPTER 1

## DIVE INTO PERSONAL LEADERSHIP

*In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.*

~ Eleanor Roosevelt ~

*Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do.*

~ Nelson Mandela ~

One weeknight in August 2020 after completing the work I had planned for the day, I remained seated in my lower-level home office. I was lost in thought. My thoughts took me to several realms as I reflected on my life and the lives of others within and without my circle. Suddenly, an expansive, rich lode of personal possibilities burst into existence. This was no ordinary thinking process; it was a light-bulb moment, a moment of discovery and change and collecting my thoughts, so I could share the treasures I had just unearthed with as many people as possible.

It all started even before that moment. I had been undergoing several days of mental work when on that day, I became overwhelmed with thoughts about my own experiences and personal journey as I strove to learn what had worked for me and what had not. But then I realized that I had come a marked distance from

where I had begun. I saw then that I have had many opportunities in my life, such that you may say I have been fortunate. But in reality, no one handed anything to me on a platter of gold.

My reflection continued for many days; in fact, it continued for a season. I began to think deeply about how opportunities, successes, personal achievements, wealth, good health, and other good things of life are disproportionately distributed. In the end, I realized that most of us fall into one of five categories.

The first category includes those who truly want to make their lives count for something significant, who work hard to succeed in their endeavors but somehow still do not have much to show for all their effort. This category of people are generally hard-working and have big dreams but struggle through life while striving to become successful. However, they have yet to determine exactly *what* they need to do to attain achievement, success, and fulfillment in life.

The second category includes those who have done relatively well in their lives or careers but got caught up in the commonplace race of growing up, going to school, getting a job, getting married, raising kids, owning a few things, retiring, and counting the rest of their days. They are generally not motivated to continually push personal boundaries to achieve great successes.

The third category includes those who are notably successful but still feel unfulfilled or sometimes even miserable. They believe there are still missing pieces they can't find or figure out. These people are looking for happiness, peace, hope, personal satisfaction, and fulfillment.

The fourth category includes those who act as bystanders or spectators in the race of life, watching as time flies past without making any impact or deriving any real meaning from life. Perhaps this is their life purpose, or perhaps they just need to know there could be more if they learned the principles.

Last, we have the fifth category: this group includes those who personify success through their life achievements, personal fulfillment, and legacies. They have learned or intuitively discovered the principles of personal leadership.

We all know there is more to life than many of us ever do or achieve. However, only a fraction of people know the formula to break free from an average life and attain significant achievements, successes, and fulfillment. But I use the word, “formula,” cautiously as that is part of the problem. There is no particular formula for success. There are no seven or eight steps to success. It is only through many months of self-reflection and thinking about my life map and many other people today and in history that I came to the following seven important conclusions.

1. The definition of success and personal achievement is not universal as success comes in different shapes and sizes for everyone.
2. You attract great achievements and make great impacts not by following some guidelines, rules, or procedures, but by undertaking a process of personal change and imbibing the culture that makes people successful.
3. Generally, everyone has the capacity to learn and grow in the attitudes and attributes of truly successful people.
4. Success is not only about what a person achieves but also about who the person becomes because of the process of reaching for the achievement.
5. The extent of the impact made using a combination of potential ability and the resources and opportunities available is the yardstick of success.
6. Personal fulfillment in life is not a function of what you have or you do not have but rather of what you do with what you have.

7. It is everyone's responsibility to rise up, shape up, and stand out through the pursuit of personal leadership.

To change someone's life forever, just share this rare gem, the secret treasure that changes lives, with them. Read, learn, and share these principles of personal leadership. Almost everyone wants to know the way to success. They spend their lives searching for it or for someone who will share it with them. Yet what we need to do to become who we are meant to be is really no secret at all. It will all become clear as you read this book and discover that the secret was within you all along. However, many are still unable to find it because they look in all the wrong places.

I would like you to follow along and keep an open mind as you read this entire book. I will share what I have learned, experienced, and continue to experience to show you the path to success. We will embark on a journey that will provoke your thought process and incite you to swing into action. This will be a pot of gold that you will treasure for the rest of your life.

But before you continue to read on, go over the seven conclusions again and take a moment to think through each one. Spend some time studying each statement carefully before moving on.

## **We Each Choose the Course of Our Own Lives**

Remember when I said we make deliberate choices in directing the trajectory of our lives? You probably knew that already. However, the challenge for most of us is how to know exactly which direction we should choose. So, here is your simple answer. Your dreams, based on your life's purpose, determine your life's trajectory. I discuss how to discover your life's purpose extensively in this book, so keep reading. Your life's purpose will

point you in a certain direction, but you must choose which direction; it is your personal choice.

I too had to make a career choice in my earlier years. A year I will always remember is 2008: that was the year I had to choose between my dream career and my alternative. I graduated from the university in 2004, full of dreams, with a clear idea what my future would look like. I imagined my career, family, associations, achievements, and quality of life. My desire to acquire whatever additional education and training required for me to become a notable researcher in my chosen field of engineering was immense. I wanted to take a frontline position in materials science research and use my talents, skills, and intelligence to make the world a better place. I wanted to develop my innate abilities and become a leader, a noteworthy scientist, and engineer by creating new materials and products and learning to lead teams that would help organizations succeed in product innovation.

So, I focused on my goals and created a plan. However, my plan had a weakness I had not thought of. Something was missing. That something was the possibility of failure or disappointment. I have always been someone who reads and learns a lot about positive thinking. As such, my plan included only seamless transitions from one stage of life to the next, but things did not work out that way. I experienced many disappointments and setbacks that deterred me from achieving what I wanted in exactly the way I had planned. For example, I thought I would begin a new journey by traveling to the West to undertake my graduate studies. Believe me, I had it all planned; I had a sixteen-year plan all drawn up. However, doors continued to shut on me as I tried to achieve that goal. I needed things to line up, but they did not because while trying to secure the right travel documents, I missed many graduate admission opportunities. The whole experience was disappointing and disheartening.

When I seemed to have hit an indestructible wall, I decided to work on my alternative plan: to get a job, any job, and keep moving forward. Success comes with forward movement, not stagnation. In late 2005, after one year of paid voluntary national service, I finally secured interviews with the management consulting giant and global Fortune 500 company, Accenture. And I got the job. It was an illustrious career jumpstart for me after graduating from university. My challenge, however, was that even though I had landed a wonderful job as an alternative, I knew in the depths of my heart that my dream lay in a different direction. Inasmuch as I performed well in my job, I just could not forget my sixteen-year plan. My Accenture job did not align with my career dreams. That's not to say it wasn't a respectable job that I was grateful to have; it did offer spectacular work exposure, remuneration, and overseas travel opportunities, not to mention a wonderful work environment and more. It was an enjoyable and convenient alternative to my career dream ... but it was still the alternative.

After experiencing a few years of disappointments with my career dream and settling into what seemed like a promising alternative career, in December 2008, the situation changed. In my hand was a ticket to board a different train, to start what I had envisioned starting four years earlier. My original plan to go to graduate school to earn my master's and doctoral degrees in engineering finally panned out. Would I leave my progressing career to start all over again? Should I? Starting over meant significant financial strain, inconvenient relocation, uncertainties, taking chances, and a complete change of direction. My sixteen-year plan suggested that I should have started my journey while I was still single, but I had started a family during my deviation from my plan and needed to factor my young family into the change.

I was at a crossroads. Which direction should I follow? Was it a difficult decision? Yes, by all means. Nevertheless, my dream was more important to me than my alternative career path. I went all out to pursue my dream, to do what I needed to do and follow what I believed to be the direction of my life's purpose. So, I took that bold step. I left my job to head to graduate school, to start a new career all over again. I endured the rigor of studying for master's and doctoral degrees, lived humbly with my young family through the financial strains, and eventually secured my spot among respected researchers in my field. Am I living the dream now? Yes, I am, and I am glad I made that decision, as hard as it was to make.

I faced a hard choice then, just as everyone faces choices from time to time. Some choices may be as simple as changing the direction of one's career as I did, while some may require more significant steps. The truth is that the choices we make, whether small or big, determine the trajectory of our lives. As we make those choices, we must

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*The choices we make, whether  
small or big, determine the tra-  
jectory of our lives*

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mindfully ensure that our choices move us closer to the destinations we have envisioned based on our life purpose.

And that is the purpose of this book. Drawing from my personal stories and experiences, and what I have learned from many others, I wrote this book to provide a framework to help you choose the right direction for your life and to shed light on what you need to know and do to become an achiever, a person of influence, and someone who multiplies success in your life's endeavors.

## What to Expect

This book is a beacon to everyone looking for an answer—an answer to their quest for a complete and fulfilling life—a life full of achievements, successes, and personal significance. You may be a young person just starting out, aspiring to remarkable things in life and looking for a solid foundation for your professional journey and personal life. You may be someone farther along in your journey and looking for fulfillment and personal significance in business or another area of your life. You may be an established leader in the public or private sectors looking to expand your vision and impact. You may be working for a charity, religious organization, or not-for-profit business and still aspiring to become a better agent of change. In fact, you may even be at a crossroads, unsatisfied with where you are and looking to create change, to grow and make your life count for something significant. The good news is the principles of personal achievement are fundamentally applicable irrespective of your stage of life.

As I reflected on my personal journey, I realized modern leadership literature was missing a big piece of the success puzzle: personal identity. The discovery of personal identity becomes integral as we experience rapidly changing demographics around the world and deal with social issues and their impacts on your ability to thrive and succeed. Therefore, I put forth considerable effort to elucidate the need for a personal blueprint for success and how to develop that blueprint. In the book, I focus on helping you cultivate the necessary personal leadership attitudes and discuss how to exploit your creativity. The book also includes not only a framework for discovering and establishing yourself in

your life's work, but also how to explore the world of possibilities. It creates context for the seasons we go through while working toward success.

This book culminates in the responsibilities that come with success, including modeling success and leaving a legacy, that we should all embrace as a successful agent of change for society. It is everyone's responsibility to rise above limitations and achieve success in whatever we do through our intentions and deliberate actions. The crux of this book is that directing the course of your life requires self-determination, self-development, and taking self-responsibility, all of which constitute the pursuit of personal leadership. Without the proper understanding and application of the

principles of personal leadership, you will find it difficult to achieve remarkable things, become successful in your business or vocation, thrive

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*Directing the course of your life requires self-determination, self-development, and taking self-responsibility*

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in a world governed by these principles, live a life of significance, or become an agent of change in society.

The principles discussed in this book are interdependent. You must carefully examine every principle on its own merit but use each one in tandem with all other principles to realize the benefits. Do not isolate one part of this book and use it as a nugget for success. That mistake is common. There is no one simple formula for success. Becoming a successful individual, with personal achievements and a fulfilling life to show for it, requires going through the process, which also requires the determination to follow all the fundamental principles of success.

This process is for you, all of you, irrespective of your geographic location, education level, religion, cultural background,

language, political affiliation, or economic situation. The principles hold true everywhere and for everyone. I am calling on you to let us reason together. My intention is to provoke your interest, get you excited, and allow you to make your own choices with every section of this book. Ultimately, I hope you imbibe and grow in the personal leadership culture of achievers. I hope you enjoy your personal leadership development journey as you turn every page of this book.

## CHAPTER 1 DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

1. Referring to the beginning of this chapter, to which of the five categories of people do you think you belong? You will need to evaluate yourself based on that category as you read through this book.
2. Which of the seven conclusions on pages five and six stand out for you the most? Why?
3. Was there a time in your life when you made a complete change of direction just as I did with my career? What was your motivation for the change?
4. What major life's decisions are you planning to make now? Write them down. How important are they to you?
5. What are your expectations of this book? Write them down now, so you can evaluate your learning after completing the book.

## CHAPTER 2

### DISCOVER YOUR PERSONAL IDENTITY

*Unless we base our sense of identity upon the truth of who we are, it is impossible to attain true happiness.*

~ Brenda Shoshanna ~

*Be who you were created to be, and you will set the world on fire.*

~ St. Catherine of Sienna ~

**C**. Robert Jennings interviewed and wrote about an iconic person by the name of Theodor Giesel in a 1965 article published by *The Saturday Evening Post* in 2016.<sup>1</sup> In 1918, at the age of fourteen, Giesel had an unforgettable experience: Theodor Roosevelt came to Springfield, Massachusetts, Giesel's hometown, to address an audience of thousands and present awards to the ten Boy Scouts with record sales of War Bonds.

Theodor Giesel was the last of the ten award-winning boys to receive personal recognition from the former president. Giesel waited anxiously as the president handed out the awards. At last, Giesel found himself alone on stage with President Roosevelt. You can imagine what the young boy expected: his earned award and accolades from his president. But instead of an award, President Roosevelt said, "What is this little boy doing here?"

No, the former president was not just being mean. Someone had mistakenly left Giesel's name off the list, and President Roosevelt had only nine medals. You can imagine Giesel's humiliation as the crowd kept staring at him as he was ushered off the stage. Geisel dreaded public appearances for the rest of his life.

At the age of sixty-one, during Jennings's interview in 1965, Theodor Geisel said, "I can still hear them whispering, 'There's little Teddy Geisel. He tried to get a medal.' And to this day, I keep asking myself, 'What *am* I doing here?'" In his own words, Geisel even said, "I always have the feeling that people will take one look and recognize me as a fraud."

Who was Theodor Geisel? Do you know *The Cat in the Hat*? Oh yes, that was written by Dr. Seuss, otherwise known as Theodor Geisel, now popularly known for his work in children books, cartoons, illustrations, and poetry. He wrote dozens of record best sellers and has been a hero of entertainment in the last century. Throughout his life, Dr. Seuss regularly turned down public appearances due to his fear of audiences because of his singular encounter with humiliation during the incident with President Roosevelt. Dr. Seuss was a notable personality, but he could not get past his humiliating experience in childhood for the rest of his life. It seems he allowed the rest of his life to be defined by his negative experience, something many of us do.

Do you also have a little voice whispering, "What are you doing here?" Dr. Seuss's story is an important...

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<https://www.deleola.com/pursuitofpersonalleadership.html>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Dele Ola is the award-winning author of *Be a Change Agent: Leadership in a Time of Exponential Change*, publisher of the *Prowezz Leadership Newsletter*, a change leader, and an accomplished professional engineer. His passions include corporate leadership, personal growth, skills development, and technological innovation.



Dr. Ola started his leadership journey with Accenture, a global Fortune 500 company before earning his Doctor of Philosophy in mechanical and manufacturing engineering from the University of Manitoba, eventually transitioning to applied research in aerospace and manufacturing at Red River College Polytechnic. After many significant contributions, he became Director of the Technology Access Centre for Aerospace and Manufacturing, serving as a major contributor to applied research leadership.

Dr. Ola has held many leadership positions and served on the board of several prominent organizations. He won the 2016 Research Excellence BRAVO Award, and his book, *Be a Change Agent*, won the business category of the 2021 Next Generation Indie Book Awards.

An active leader in innovation and applied research, Dr. Ola continues to lead change in his work. His vision is to develop change agents who will challenge the status quo, take charge of the future, and evolve into what they are meant to be in life.

## About Dr. Dele Ola's Award-Winning *Be a Change Agent*

Are you painfully aware of the mismatch between outdated approaches and our rapidly evolving world? Dr. Dele Ola looks unflinchingly at the problem of resisting change and offers a wealth of expert guidance on how to embrace positive growth and foster development.

*Be A Change Agent* is a comprehensive examination of change leadership: the need for it, the qualities of change leaders, and the importance of having great change teams. Dr. Ola first guides the reader through stories of fearless leaders and explores the Veritas qualities that made them successful. Then he discusses building collaborative teams that work well and have the independence to innovate without overt bureaucratic control. Dr. Ola's years working with high-performance teams helped him develop an insightful tool for looking at three spectrums that cause tension in teams:

- The Systems Spectrum-Structure versus influence
- The Reaction Spectrum-Reflection versus action
- The Perspective Spectrum-Reality versus idealism

And the Tensions Equalizer tool will change how you view the balance of members in your team. Finally, the book culminates in a discussion of the future of work, learning, enterprise, and innovation.

Complete with insightful questionnaires and reflection questions, *Be A Change Agent* offers a practical toolkit for both emerging change agents and seasoned influencers to evaluate their leadership qualities and become the very best they can be.

