

STEVE MOORE



Practical Steps to
Discover, Optimize, and
Unleash Your Potential

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To my dad, the ultimate dreamer-leader in my life, thanks for modeling a passion-filled life of learning and growing. To my mom, the ultimate dream-nurturer, thanks for keeping God's dreams for me alive, in the darkest of nights, before I knew how to dream for myself.



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PREFACE

Each of us is on a journey toward who we want to be, who we were meant to be, and what we will achieve with our lives. Making progress on that dream-inspired journey requires growth. Personal growth is not only for leaders or overachievers; it is for everyone. That means this book is for you, regardless of your leadership aptitude or your stage in life. Your interest in this book is an indication that a dreamer lives inside you. If this book was a gift, someone sees you as a potentially influential person, someone worth his or her investment. As you continue reading, you will find yourself among friends.

WHAT I KNOW ABOUT YOU

My guess is that, looking back at the last twelve months of your life, you could quickly identify some evidence of growth. You might also admit that the rate and extent of your growth could have been greater—and that you wish they had been. You've grown, but not as much as you'd like. Am I right so far?

Here's what else I know: the coming year will be different. In the following twelve months, you will take giant steps toward

becoming the person you want to be and achieving the things you most want to do with your life.

How do I know that?

Imagine two identical trees planted side by side. They are the same age, same species, and are planted in the same climate, but one gets fertilized and the other doesn't. You tell me what will happen. Obviously, the tree that gets fed will grow while the tree that is starved for nourishment will languish. Now think of the two trees as two successive years in your life and imagine that this book is a good load of fertilizer. No, I'm not saying the book is a lot of compost! If it were, I'd give it to a tree. But I do believe this book will do for you what fertilizer would do for a tree—stimulate growth. So please grow with me through the three adventures that comprise this journey.

- Learning the Power of Dreaming
- Learning the Power of Growing
- Learning the Power of Multiplying

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ME

Helping people grow toward their dreams is my passion. My work involves people development in a values- and faith-based context, touching both the nonprofit and corporate sectors. I have worked extensively with young leaders and high-level organizational leaders all over the world as the president and CEO of a network that resourced over 20,000 people who served with nearly 200 organizations. In my current role as president of nexleader, LLC, I have the opportunity to partner with universities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, churches, and coaches, to help people discover, optimize, and unleash their potential, in pursuit of their dreams.

There's something else you should know about me: I'm a Jesus-follower and seek to follow his example as written in the Bible, which serves as both a filter and an anchor for all of my life. The convictions that result from my faith have given me a perspective that colors the ideas I will share with you. But the subject of personal growth is not confined to those who share my faith journey. The principles I relate in this book will aid in your personal development, regardless of your faith perspective. My aim is to help you become the person you dream of being—especially if your dream adds value to others. In a few places, I share personal beliefs, not to be dogmatic, but to be authentic. I'll always let you know that's coming, so if you prefer to jump ahead, you'll know where to reconnect.

I'd love to hear from you twelve months from now, and maybe I will. Whatever your dream is—even if it hasn't yet poked its head through the floor of your consciousness—I'm confident you will be much closer to its realization when we conclude this journey a few pages from here. Who knows? We may even end up working on the same dream!

So instead of offering you a Jiminy Cricket wish that your dreams will all come true, let me offer a far more meaningful prayer: may you be true to your dream.

PART 1



*You have the power to
realize your dreams.*



PERSONAL CAPACITY

The Power to Realize Your Dreams

No one knows how close we can come to realizing 100 percent of our potential. You may have heard it said that most people use only 10 percent of their mental capacity. Actually, that notion has been traced to a casual observation made by Albert Einstein. Since many of his scientific theories proved true, the 10 percent figure was widely repeated—perhaps to Einstein’s amusement. There is no scientific data to support such a claim.

Psychological researchers have measured the total mental, or psychic, energy available in a life span of seventy-five years. The term *psychic energy*, in this context, refers to thinking power, not mental telepathy or other paranormal abilities. Experts figure that the brain can process up to 110 bits of information per second. To put that in perspective, it requires about forty bits to understand what another person is saying. This means that over a period of seventy-five years, deducting an average of eight hours sleep time per day, a human being has the capacity to process some 173 *billion* bits of information.¹

While 173 billion bits sounds like an astoundingly large volume of information, remember that much of our mental

energy is expended in the mundane routines of life—getting ready for work, deciding what to eat for breakfast, and making the daily commute. Every conscious moment of our lives we draw on our capacity to process information, and every conversation, thought, or feeling expends some of this limited and precious resource of mental or psychic energy.

This begs a worthwhile question: on what are you spending your psychic capital? Are you investing it in thoughts and activities that develop and sharpen skills, expand and refine your understanding, and build and strengthen relationships? This kind of expenditure, rather than letting mental energy go to waste, helps generate an improved quality of life in the future. In other words, it helps you grow.

When we think of mental capacity in those terms, the operative question is not how much capacity do most human beings use, but how much do *you* use? How are you spending your mental energy, and what are you getting in return?

THE CAPACITY INDEX

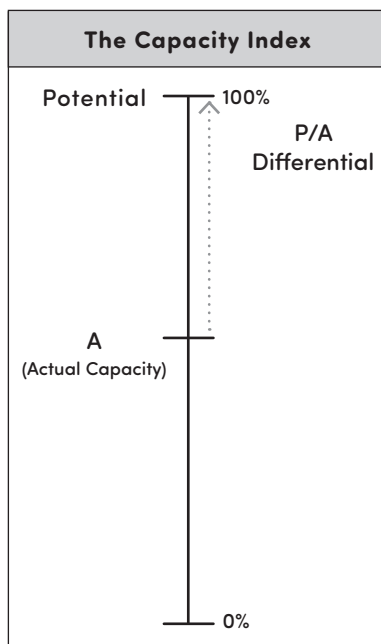
A simple way to measure your use of mental energy is by using a diagram I call the *Capacity Index*. Here's how it works: draw a vertical line on a piece of paper, or even in the margin of this page. At the top of the line, write "100 percent." At the bottom of the line, write "0 percent." Now place a horizontal mark at the top of the line (at the 100 percent level) and label it "P," which stands for your *potential*. This represents your maximum capacity—100 percent of your physical, mental, social, and spiritual potential.

Now place a second horizontal mark at whatever point on this line represents your present level of development. Label this mark "A," which stands for *actual*. I realize that this process is highly subjective, so take a few moments to think before you mark your actual developed capacity. (No

pressure, but remember that you are now expending finite psychic energy!)

The distance between the two marks is what I call your *P/A Differential*—the difference between what is possible for you and where you actually are. I’ve done this simple exercise with thousands of people. Most of them place their A mark between 50 and 70 percent. But regardless of your P/A Differential, the important question is this: *what are you currently doing to increase the value of A?*

You cannot increase the value of A—your actual capacity—by wasting bits of mental energy. But you can choose to grow by purposely investing your psychic energy in activities that contribute to your physical, mental, social, and spiritual development. You can leverage this mental power into an expanded capacity and an increased quality of life. You can engage in a process of personal growth that will be repeated throughout your lifetime, resulting in an upward spiral of continued development.



COUNTING THE COST OF DIMINISHED CAPACITY

What is at stake if you choose not to invest time and energy to increase A, your actual capacity? By now you’ve probably realized two things: the bits of mental energy that slip through the cracks in your mind are irretrievably

lost, and they don't come from an inexhaustible supply. So if you choose not to use your mental energy purposefully, you're wasting a limited resource. But there's a greater loss. If you don't grow toward your full potential, *you will miss the chance to live out your dreams.*

Fourteen-year-old Homer Hickam faced this risk on a clear October night in 1957 when the Soviet satellite Sputnik traveled over his home in Coalwood, West Virginia. That night a dream was ignited in Homer's heart. The son of a coal miner, Homer dreamed of building rockets; he wanted to become an aerospace engineer. You may remember his story as told in the movie *October Sky*.

Young Homer's first rocket-building attempt was a dismal failure. Instead of launching into space, the homemade craft blew up the garden fence. Homer's father, trapped by the limited expectations of small-town West Virginia, dismissed the boy's dream as foolishness. But Homer refused to give up. He knew that if he would ever live his dream, he would have to grow. The A on his Capacity Index would have to move much closer to P if this coal miner's son would ever be transformed into an aerospace engineer. Homer recognized the need to educate himself about rocket science. Although he struggled with schoolwork, the power of the dream motivated him to learn.

Along with some friends, Homer eventually built a rocket that won first prize in a state science fair and a second rocket that won a gold medal in the national science fair. The national prize opened the door for Homer to study at Virginia Tech. He later worked for seventeen years as an aerospace engineer at NASA, where he helped to train astronauts and design Spacelab.

It is not particularly remarkable that fourteen-year-old Homer Hickam had a dream. It is remarkable that in spite of the tremendous odds against him, he invested his psychic

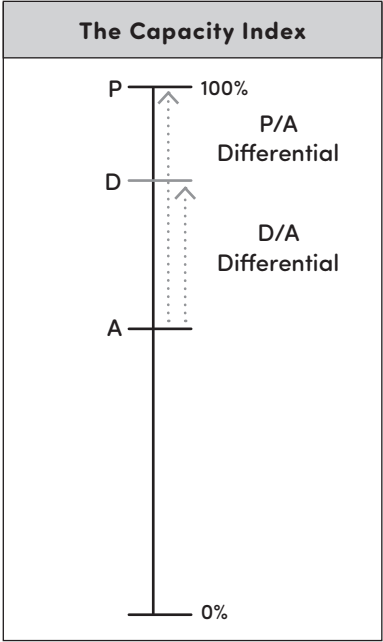
capital wisely to create a rising orbit of personal growth. It is remarkable that he *lived* his dream.

You have a dream too, whether you have you have consciously recognized it or not. The question is, will you live your dream? The answer to that question hinges on your commitment to grow. Yes, the stakes are high—as high as Homer’s October sky.

THE D/A DIFFERENTIAL

Let’s return to the Capacity Index. You’ve already measured your P/A Differential, the difference between your maximum potential and your actual capacity. Now let’s measure a third element, the capacity of your dream.

First, imagine your own October sky, a life-shaping experience that sparks a dream inside you. What is that dream? What do you aspire to be or to do? Next, place a mark on the Capacity Index that indicates your aspiration and label it “D” for *dream*. I believe your dream will always intersect with your Capacity Index at some point higher than A—your actual capacity. Dreams inspire us to reach beyond where we are. They command our attention, focus our thinking, and energize our actions. Dreams pull us upward into a higher orbit.



The distance between D and A on your Capacity Index is what I call the *D/A Differential*. And please understand the significance of this next sentence. *Your D/A differential is more important than your P/A differential*. If you don't fully grasp that sentence yet, go back and reread the previous paragraph. Now, the really, really big question is this: What will you do to close the D/A gap? That is the reality check of personal growth.

It is this unique relationship between dreaming and growing that sparked the model I call the *Dream Cycle*. I'll explain the Dream Cycle more fully in the next chapter, but for now, please understand why growing toward your potential is so important: your dreams are at stake.

WHEN DESTINY CALLS YOUR BLUFF

It seems that every movie Western has two obligatory scenes: a poker game and a gunfight. The poker game causes tension to build, as one of the players bluffs while the stakes continue to rise. The gunfight predictably follows when another player calls the first person's bluff, bringing the game to a sudden end.

To say that you have a dream yet fail to grow is like bluffing in the poker game of life. It is pretending to be doing something that you really are not. The problem is that destiny never folds; it always calls your bluff. The time will come when you have to play your cards, make your move, seize the day. In that moment, if you have not demonstrated ownership of your dream by acting on a commitment to grow, you will be left with an empty hand.

Those who insist on pretending rather than growing transform their dreams into fantasies. They squander a hoped-for future in a world of make-believe. Usually, that happens not because they risk everything, but because they risk nothing. To pursue your dreams will involve risk,

perhaps even danger. But if you do not risk something by making the effort to grow, you will one day stare destiny in the face empty-handed. You will be left to wonder what might have been, if only you had been willing to act.

I remind you again: the reason you must keep growing is that your dreams are at stake. Thankfully, unlike old Hollywood Westerns, life allows an alternate ending. You write that ending as you choose to respond to the reality of your D/A Differential.

You don't have to sit there pretending. You can make your dream come true.

OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

Many years ago, I had an amazing conversation with my grandfather. He was eighty-five years old at the time. I had called to see how he was doing one winter day, and the conversation went something like this.

"Well, it's been a busy day," my grandfather said. "I spent part of it shoveling snow off the roof."

"You what?" I couldn't believe my ears. Why would an eighty-five-year-old man be shoveling snow off a roof? I thought I detected a smile as he told me the answer.

"Somebody has to do it, you know. You can't just leave all that snow up there."

"But Gramps," I shot back, "what if you had fallen? You could have been hurt. Couldn't you get someone else to climb up on the roof?"

His chuckle both acknowledged that I was right and expressed a childlike glee at having accomplished the feat without difficulty. "Oh, I didn't want to bother anybody with something like that."

"Come on, Gramps!" I was adamant now. "What were you thinking?"

His insightful answer placed so much of life into perspective. He said, “Seems to me I had a simple choice. I could either sit back and wait for the roof to fall in, or I could get up there and do something about it.” I hung up the phone hoping I could climb even halfway up a ladder if I lived to be his age.

It is always easier to sit in a comfortable chair inside a warm house than to climb atop the house to shovel snow from the roof. It is easier to stay in a comfort zone than to venture out and try new and challenging things. But a comfort zone can easily become a rut—or even a grave. My grandfather knew that allowing a foot of wet snow to stand on an aging roof was a recipe for disaster. Of the two dangers, the risk of falling off the roof was the one he was willing to take. While I still wouldn’t have wanted him to shovel the roof at eighty-five, I have to admit, I like the way he approaches life.

To settle for your present level of A—your current actual capacity—will always be more comfortable than to climb the ladder of personal growth to reach your dreams. But if you just sit there, taking a pass on the adventure of personal development, the weight of your dreams will eventually come crashing down around you. Yes, you will have to take some risks in order to climb the ladder toward your dreams. But consider the alternative.

So as you face the reality of your own D/A Differential, consider this: which risk are you going to choose, the risk that comes with doing something, or the far greater hazard of doing nothing?



LEVERAGE POINTS

1. If you have not already done so, mark the value of your actual development (A) on the Capacity Index. Reflect on your P/A Differential, the difference between your actual capacity and your maximum potential.

2. Think about your biggest life dream. Place a mark on the diagram showing where your dream (D) intersects the Capacity Index. Consider the following questions based on the value of D and A on your Capacity Index:

- If $D=A$, what does this say about the size of your dream?
- If $D>A$, what does this say about your need to grow?
- If $D>P$, how can you reality-test your goal to find out if it is a dream or a fantasy?

3. What system or process have you used over the last few years to address your D/A Differential? How effective has it been?



NOTES

Chapter 1: Personal Capacity: The Power to Realize Your Dreams

1. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Good Business* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 2003), 78.

Chapter 2: The Dream Cycle: Listening for the Future

1. Martin Luther King Jr., "I Have A Dream..." www.archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf, accessed April 2019.

2. 1 Samuel 3:1.
3. 1 Samuel 3:5.
4. 1 Samuel 3:9.

Chapter 3: Beneath the Surface: Hidden Challenges to Your Dream

1. See Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 111–112. In his model of self-directed learning, Boyatzis describes the difference between one's ideal and real self as exposing strengths and gaps. I have substituted the