

# Transforming Your Leadership Character: The Lean Thinking & Agility Way



**Dave Cornelius, DM**

## Your Leadership Narrative through Stories

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People become connected with us through the stories—or *narrative*—of our lives. The stories we tell of our triumphs and struggles shape the mental images and perceptions people have of us. The stories others tell about their experiences relating to our character increase and decrease the narrative about who we are. Defining your own *leadership narrative* is imperative—because if you do not, others will do it for you.

During the political season in the United States, you often hear candidates attempt to define their leadership narrative before the opposition takes the initiative to define it for them. If you remember in 2003, President George W. Bush stood on an aircraft carrier with a message on a banner that said “Mission Accomplished.” That banner message became his narrative going forward. The fact is, 13 years later in 2016, President Barack Obama is *still* winding down a war defined by that narrative, and the next president will be as well in 2017.

In the business environment, definition of the leadership narrative is similar to the political arena. Someone in the office or market will define the CEO’s

leadership narrative if he or she is not proactive enough to make their own definition a priority.

When defining your own leadership narrative, you can take a serious and deliberate act to go solo and define your narrative alone, or you can wrangle a few trusted advisors to help. In today's connected world, you can choose to take advantage of collaborative intelligence—also known as the “wisdom of crowds”—to shape the narrative you reveal to the world.

Alternatively, you can rely on historical experiences to inform and shape the desired narrative. But a more thoughtful position may be to consider combining both the “wisdom of crowds” and historical experiences to arrive at a more precise narrative. Be aware that you will experience conflicting positions and your critical thinking mind will have to decide which narrative is the best fit.

Storytelling has been with mankind from the beginning of time. The literal imagery frees innovation to produce the energy needed to spawn change. At times when we need to inspire a group of people to take steps to change the status quo, a good story may help to spark enthusiasm. A strong narrative helps us make sense of the complex world of globalization and partners. People far removed from the negotiations and relationships can

make sense of the fuzziness, and become energized without having to participate in the experience. The next time you are challenged with inspiring a crowd, remember to have a back pocket story that generates emergent truths.

## Remain Intentional

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Finally, there is one more activity that will help you move forward in the transformational process—remain intentional for long-term sustainable results. Once a positive result is obtained, you may feel that no further work is needed to retain the improvement, much like the gains achieved during exercising, such as muscle tone improvement or waist line reduction. But, as soon as good practices end, regression can subconsciously begin. In order to maintain positive results and codify transformation practices, you should take the time for regular personal reflection, and schedule a periodic check-up with your teams of trusted advisors. A regular retrospective is a healthy practice much like frequent exercise.

The journey from an NS&F leadership disposition to an RS&F disposition is not for the faint of heart. As discussed, *intentional* activities are the only way for Shawn, Chase, and Mario to significantly improve their leadership dispositions. Embarking on the journey with the assistance of a team of trusted advisors will improve the chances of success. Frequent monitoring of progress will help with the transformation through inspecting and adapting. When you adopt these activities yourself, within three months you can expect to see behavioral changes that will amaze the people you

serve. You will be amazed as well, and may decide to share the transformation experience with others.

**People need better leaders to guide them, but they also have a desire to become better leaders themselves in many aspects of life, such as businesses, churches, non-profits, sports teams, and more. Many corporate professionals and other practitioners in various disciplines pursue the goal of being solid leaders. But despite training and mentoring, these aspiring leaders still fall short of becoming the kind of leader who inspires others to deliver to the best of their abilities.**

**Based on extensive experience and observation, I believe we all have leadership traits, but proactive efforts are needed in order to grow and transform these skills.**

**The appropriate level of planning, nurturing, and execution can help leaders navigate the course from a non-starter to a resilient starter and finisher.**

**Shawn, Chase, and Mario are three personas who represent the leadership dispositions of resilient-starters, quick-starters, and non-starters and finishers.**

**Their stories model the ways that you can use lean thinking and agility to transform your leadership character.**



**Dr. Dave Cornelius**

Dr. Dave Cornelius is an experienced business and IT professional, and a globally recognized lean and agile catalyst who empowers others to achieve their very best. He specializes in coaching, training, and leading co-located and distributed teams to deliver quality innovations from concept to cash.

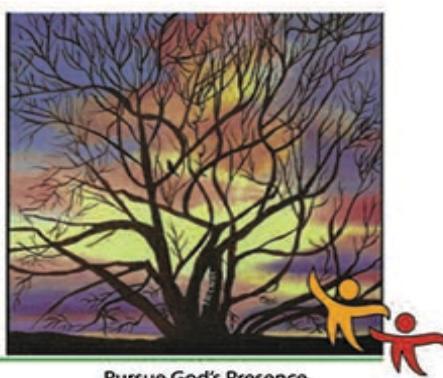
Dave is the founder of 5 Saturdays, a program that empowers students to become leaders in business and STEM fields. In 2014, he received the

SoTec Inspiration Award from the Southland Technology Conference, an honor that recognizes technology professionals for giving back to their community.

He currently presents webinars for business and technology professionals, hosts a podcast on GrokShare.com, teaches courses on KnolShare.org, and publishes the blog “KnolShare with Dr. Dave” on KnolShare.org. He is a well-known speaker and author in the agile and project management professional development communities.

Dave is a man of faith and is active in both his local and global neighborhoods. He has also held several leadership roles, where he helped IT groups develop partnerships with other groups within the organization.

Dave’s interest in leadership started on the island of St. Croix, where he played as a point guard on his high school basketball team, and culminated with earning his Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership. His first manuscript and doctoral dissertation, “The Value of Scrum to Organizations: A Case Study,” highlights the importance and value of leadership through the practices of lean thinking and agility.



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