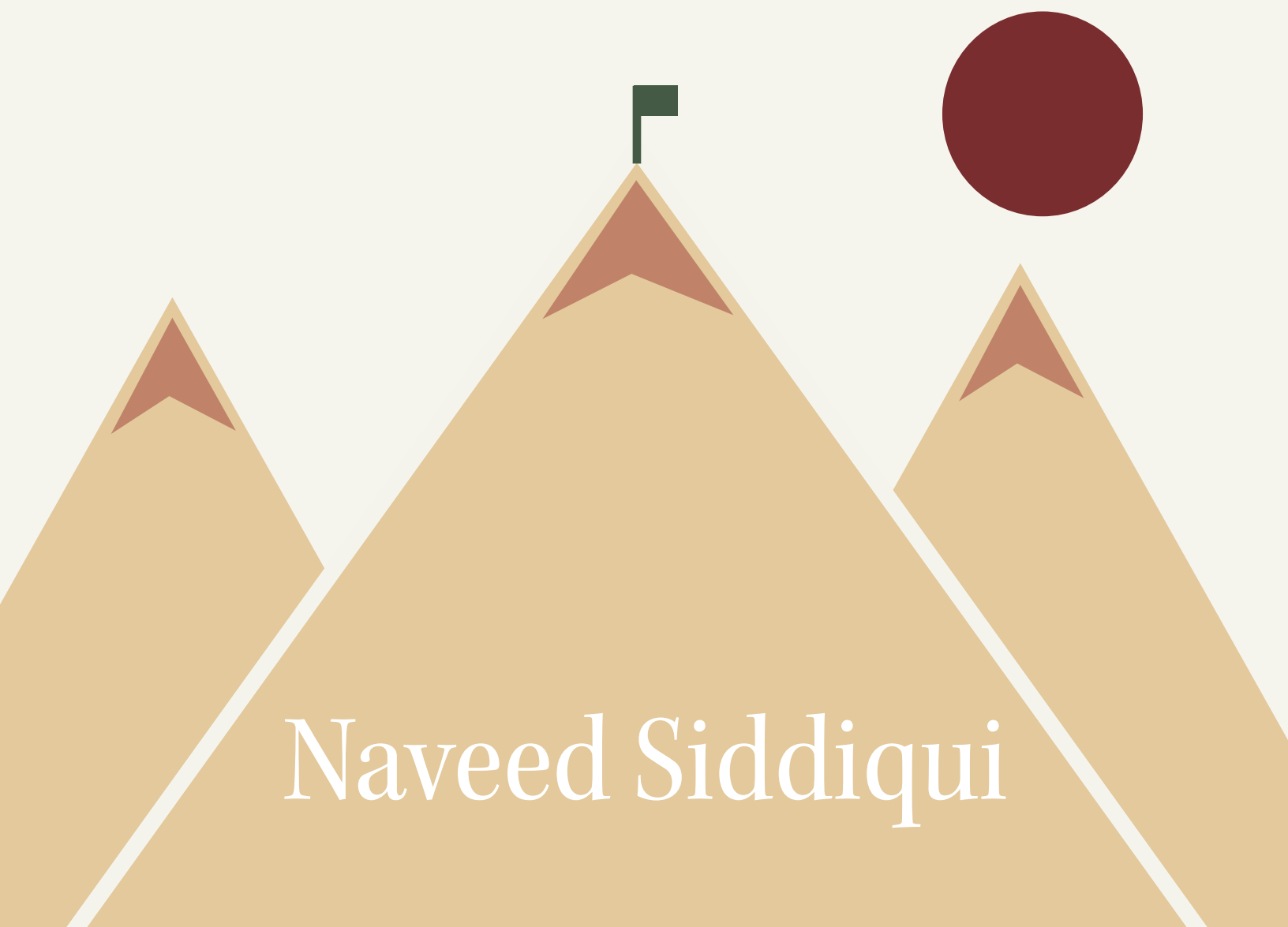




Leader Launch

*The companion guide for
a new generation of leaders*

(SAMPLE)



Naveed Siddiqui

A person wearing a blue jacket with an orange hood and a backpack is walking away on a dirt path through a forest. The path is covered with fallen leaves, and the trees are mostly bare, suggesting an autumn or winter setting. The person is centered in the lower half of the frame, walking towards the background.

“

*the journey of a
thousand miles begins
with a single step*

- Lao Tzu



In case you're not familiar with me and my work, let's get acquainted! Here's what you need to know.

I am a leadership coach and future of work advisor. I partner with emerging and forward-thinking leaders who strive to show up authentically for themselves and elevate how they lead others.

I want to re-imagine the way we think about and approach work. From equitable systems to thoughtfully-crafted methods of collaboration, I believe the workplace stands to become more *human*. There is still ample room in our evolving world for ambition, professional growth and meaningful impact through our careers. If we're willing to adapt, to be more intentional about *how* we work, we can create organizations in which people feel trusted, empowered and purposeful. That's the transformation I hope to foster through my work.

Creating a more human workplace, though, means changing the way we lead. Leadership can no longer be driven by dominance, fear and ego as we so often see in organizations; instead, we will need to place qualities like trust, empathy and vulnerability front and center.

I hope my work inspires you to think differently about the way you work and the way you lead. You can find additional resources at naveedsiddiqui.com.

Dear Leader,

June 2020 was a tumultuous time in our collective consciousness. Many communities were still locked down as the world faced COVID-19. It was also the month we rose up in the fight for social equality as the gravity of systemic racism was put on display for the whole world to witness.

June 2020 was also the month I was promoted to first-time leader. I was reluctant to accept the assignment. Stepping into leadership is difficult even in the best of times. But the world was changing all around us and no one knew how to react. I could barely make sense of it all myself; suddenly, I was in a position in which I had to make it make sense for others.

I logged off on a Friday as an individual contributor; three days later, the Weight of Leadership was placed squarely on my shoulders. It took nine months for me to receive any formal leadership training. Reflecting on those early days, I think about how valuable it would have been to know what I was walking into, to have someone guide me on the good, bad and ugly of being a new leader. This book is an attempt at doing that.

I've grown suspicious of long-winded self-help and leadership books. This is not one of those. This is a practical primer, something I hope you can reference throughout your leadership, to celebrate the great moments and learn from the stumbles.

Every leader's situation is unique. There's going to be a lot of trial and error, a heavy dose of roll up your sleeves and get dirty. No book can prepare you for every scenario you'll encounter on your leadership journey. But what I hope this offers is a compass, a direction in which to take your first step.

While you may have only recently attained the title of "leader", your journey didn't begin when you got promoted. You've been leading throughout your career, whether by influencing without authority, being an expert at your craft or having the ability to successfully organize a team around a common goal. Whatever lies ahead, you'll be ready.

Congratulations on investing in your growth. Bearing the Weight of Leadership is one of the greatest professional honors you can have. It's not for the faint of heart, but the fact that you're reading this means that you care about your growth and how you can show up for yourself and those you're charged with leading.

Let's go on the journey together,
Naveed

Section One

Conducting the Orchestra





*You will fall many times.
The leadership will show
from your perseverance,
from your willingness to
get back up.*

Getting to know

The Disruptive Leader

Who is the Disruptive Leader?

They're a new brand of leader. Someone who is not afraid to cut through the comforts of convention, the BS of "This is the way we've always done it". They transcend a particular discipline or level in an organization: they are a marketing manager who trusts their team to own campaign strategy, a newly-promoted software engineering lead who defends their developers from bogus meetings, or an HR executive who creates a strategy to tie performance evaluation to organizational values.

They're the person who will shape how we get work done in the future.

The Disruptive Leader has many characteristics. On the following few pages, we'll unpack three of the most important:

- Self-trust
- Grounded confidence
- Courage

Self-Trust

In her book *Dare To Lead*, professor and researcher Brené Brown offers the 'BRAVING Inventory' as a framework for building an environment of trust. Below, let's walk through each element through the lens of self-trust as a leader.

B **Boundaries:** Am I clear with myself and others about what's okay and what's not? How have these boundaries been tested recently? How did I respond in those situations?

R **Reliability:** I follow through on commitments I make. This includes being honest with myself about my capabilities and limitations. I recognize when and how I work my best.

A **Accountability:** How do I approach mistakes I make? Do I own them, apologize and learn from them? Or do I use my energy to find a scapegoat in others?

V **Vault:** I safeguard information and vulnerability that others entrust in me, and I in turn honor my own personal information and experiences by recognizing who is worthy of sharing with.

I **Integrity:** Do I live out my values, or are they just bumper stickers? When my values were tested, did I choose to do the right thing or did I opt for the fast, easy or less vulnerable path?

N **Non-judgment:** How do I approach situations where I need help? Do I feel ashamed? Or do I recognize that asking for help can be a courageous act of strength and self-awareness?

G **Generosity:** I exercise empathy by recognizing the humanity in myself and others, acknowledging that I am a constant work in progress. I recognize that I am a human before I am a leader.

Grounded Confidence

Grounded confidence means knowing my strengths, but also my limitations. It's being okay with sitting on a problem, and being intentional, methodical and inclusive with my approach to solving it. Grounded confidence is the security of not needing to be the first nor the loudest voice in the room. It's being deeply curious about what more I can learn, from myself, from the people I lead and from the world as a whole.

Grounded confidence is the self-awareness to know the value I bring to the table AND the humility and curiosity to always keep learning more.

(I set a high bar for anyone who calls themselves a leader because of the incredible responsibility it is to be entrusted with the well-being, livelihood and sense of self of others. But I have no time for leaders who conflate the Weight of Leadership with pride, ego or the arrogance to believe they and they alone need to have the answers. Let's not mistake arrogance for grounded confidence.)

Grounded confidence is the security of not needing to be the first nor the loudest voice in the room.

Courage

There's a passage from a March 2022 Microsoft article on the state of the workplace that stuck with me:

The past two years have taught us that culture will stand or fall with managers. But many managers feel stuck between leadership and new employee expectations, and they feel powerless to drive change for their team. Over half of managers (54%) feel leadership at their company is out of touch with employee expectations. And 74% say they don't have the influence or resources they need to make changes on behalf of their team

This signals two important misses:

1. A lack of trust from senior leaders for tactical leaders to make the decisions they see fit for their teams
2. An absence of courage from both senior leaders and tactical leaders to put their own comforts aside and do the hard things

Courage is choosing to do the hard thing, not the easy thing. It's speaking up for our values no matter how uncomfortable it makes us or those around us.

Courage is knowing that we put ourselves at risk by challenging the status quo but doing it anyway.

Courage is the pillow we rest our head on at night knowing that we put our self-interests aside and did right by those who count on our voice to represent them.

Why we need Disruptive Leaders now more than ever...

In the post-2020 workplace, we face a disconnect between the demands of the modern organization and those of the empowered employee. Lately, the consequences of this disconnect have shown themselves: a record rate of resignations, a severe distrust of today's organization from the newest generations (who represent half) of the U.S. workforce, and the largest crisis of work-related burnout in modern history.

Something's gotta give. Organizations will need to recalibrate how they design work and engage people to execute it. And leaders at every level must be the drivers of this evolution. Just as technology disrupts the way we live, we need leaders that disrupt the way we work.

This is where the Disruptive Leader will shine. By embodying the building blocks of self-trust, grounded confidence and courage, the Disruptive Leader will shake up our systems and create the balanced, inclusive and sustainable organizations we need for the future.

This book provides a practical framework for becoming a Disruptive Leader, the kind of leader who shows up authentically for themselves and elevates the way they show up for others.

The Weight of Leadership

The thing that concerns me the most about leadership in today's organizations is how much it's trivialized. That's evidenced by the statistic that more than half of new leaders never receive management training. Should I consider myself lucky that I actually did receive training...albeit nine months after becoming a leader?

We design talent pipelines around "promotability". We highlight "high potential" people during talent reviews and put them on management tracks. And yet when we do promote them into their first leadership position, we toss them in the deep end and expect them to know how to swim. As if the ability to build trust, set a vision and thoughtfully steer a team are bolt-on skills that you can easily pick up through osmosis.

What if we reframed leadership, placing the appropriate weight, significance and honor on the title of "leader"? What if we recognized that saying yes to being a leader means signing a contract with yourself, your team and your organization, a contract of difficult obligations, high expectations, but also, most importantly, incredible reward?

Maybe this is a hot take, but I think leadership is both the simplest and most difficult obligation one can take on in an organization...

It's simple because, at the end of the day, all people are look-

ing for is their leader to care about them as humans, to steer their work by establishing a common vision and trust them to figure out how to get it done.

However, when the shit is hitting the fan and the organization is in the thick of dark and uncertain times, the responsibility of leaders to maintain this resolve becomes exponentially harder. It becomes tempting to, for example, dodge and withhold information from your team because even *you* don't know what's going on and you can't risk appearing lost. To demand more work from your subordinates instead of demanding better prioritization from your peers and superiors. It becomes easy to default to letting your ego and fear of shame dictate your actions rather than leaning on self-trust, grounded confidence and courage to guide you.

As a leader, your first and most important responsibility is to your subordinates: those people who look to you for organizational direction, career development and protection from unreasonable expectations. Disruptive leaders understand that people can't flip a switch and turn off their emotional side when they begin work each day. When they come to work, they bring their messy, brave and human selves with them. And these leaders recognize that they, too, in order to create trust, must reciprocate.

If all of that sounds hard to do, that's the point! Leadership takes work. It demands selflessness, patience and balance in a society that rewards the opposite. But when done well, leadership brings the best out in people, brings a disparate collection of humans closer together, and moves communities forward.

It is the most rewarding weight you can bear.

Leader Brand

*What kind of leader do I
want to be?*

Every leader has a brand (whether they know it or not). A leader's brand is a collection of skills, qualities, values and motivators that drive their behaviors, priorities and techniques. The more intentional you are with yourself about your identity as a leader, the stronger your Leader Brand becomes. It's also important to note that your brand is fluid: it evolves throughout your journey.

Below is a list of qualities and skills that characterize Disruptive Leaders. Choose up to 5 that you want to focus on as you start to build your Leader Brand. Feel free to create your own if needed. Then, on the next page, respond to the reflection questions to create accountability for yourself in translating your chosen qualities into everyday behaviors.

Time Management	Strategic Thinking
Organization	Execution
Delegation	Courage
Active Listening	Conflict Resolution
Presentation Skills	Managing Up
Coaching	Collaboration
Decision-Making	Resilience
Boundary-Setting	Toughness
Patience	Vulnerability
Problem-Solving	Building Relationships
Reading a Room	Adaptability
Self-Awareness	Motivating Others
Grounded Confidence	Preparedness
Accountability	Giving Feedback
Focus	Receiving Feedback
Celebrating Team Success	Crucial Conversations
Trust	

I will be a leader who exemplifies...

What drew you to select the specific qualities that you chose? What made them stand out to you?

What major themes or stories do your chosen qualities convey about who you are and what you value?

How might each of your chosen qualities show up in your daily life? What specific habits or behaviors can you build for each quality you chose?

This is the end of the sample. To purchase the full copy of *Leader Launch*, please visit **naveedsiddiqui.com**



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