

FOR THOSE WHO LEAD IN BUSINESS
AND THOSE WHO LEAD IN LIFE

EDGE!

A LEADERSHIP STORY

BY BEA FIELDS AND COREY BLAKE
WITH EVA SILVA TRAVERS

WITH A FOREWORD BY
MICHAEL E. GERBER, AUTHOR
OF THE E-MYTH BOOKS

FOREWORD AND
SAMPLE CHAPTER

FOREWORD

I have admitted to this before, but I think it's important to say it again: I don't read business books, I write them. On the other hand, I'm often asked by friends, peers, and fans to "take a look" at their manuscript and say a word or two about how significant their book is and why I think it's a must read for you. I absolutely hate when that happens! Primarily, because I know that I will not like what I read, and then I'll be forced to alienate a friend, defrock a peer, and forever lose a fan. What to do, what to do?

So, when my friend Corey Blake and his co authors of Edge, Bea Fields and Eva Silva, came to me with the verboten request to "take a look at their book" I felt that same sense of dread I always feel under those circumstances. And, as I almost always do because I cannot bring myself to say no, I said okay, and then avoided the inevitable for more than two months, trying to find a reason why my schedule would make it impossible for me to do what I had promised to do.

When Corey called again I found myself in the impossible position of having to do what I said I would do. So, I bit my lip, took a long drink, and sat down and began to read.

You should read this book, too!

This is a tale of a man who doesn't know how to lead, but is one, like so many leaders you and I have met.

This is a business tale about the conflict between the man that needs to lead and the one who doesn't know how to that brings itself to bear, not only on the man himself, but on everyone he comes into contact with. In Edge, we get to understand what being on the leadership edge means, not in moralistic terms, but internally to the one experiencing it, and externally on those living with the one who is experiencing it upon whose decisions each and every player in the system grows to depend.

Even more important, Edge is not a business book per se, but a book about leadership, the role everyone in a role of authority must learn to play. If she or he does, magic happens. If he or she doesn't, the opposite accrues: people are hurt, objectives go most often unfulfilled, energy goes wasted, and that deadening feeling of time lost and never to be regained becomes an overriding feeling of despair as decisions are made.

How this transformation happens in Edge is what most inspired me. Our hero comes face to face with a coach.

But not just any coach. In Edge, our coach is someone I wish I knew when I needed one. She is a dazzler. (At least she dazzled me!) She possesses the wisdom of someone who knows there's no time to waste working with foolish people. She's direct, has a sureness about her, asks questions I knew I should answer, and in the end achieves what she set out to do, with such deftness and deliberate coolness, I wondered how Corey, Bea and Eva made her up (Only after reading the book

did I find out that the coach was based on author and leadership coach, Bea Fields...Bravo!).

And that's the wonder of Edge. I left it with more of an edge than I had when I picked it up.

I won't tell you the surprise ending because there isn't one. There's just a remarkable process that a wonderful book always takes me through.

All I can say is: Thank you, Corey. Thank you, Bea. And, thank you, Eva. Thank you for Edge.

You came through!

Michael E. Gerber

Author of the E-Myth books

Chief Dreamer of In The Dreaming Room

CHAPTER 10: DIGGING

“So, there seems to be a change in plans,” Mitch said to Bob, hoping to gain an ally.

“The only thing constant is change,” he replied good-naturedly, as usual. “That’s what I always say. But, what plans, specifically?”

“Well, Kate, the coach...she wants to do the 360 interviews here at the office.”

“Oh, splendid! Sounds like this woman knows how to get straight down to business!” Bob said.

So much for that idea, Mitch thought. “Right!” he said, trying to cover up his disappointment. “Absolutely. So, she’ll be meeting with everyone individually, and I know she wants to talk to you, too.”

“Just say the word! You know I’ve got your back. And, Mitch,” Bob looked down for a just a second, a pause just long enough to make Mitch feel both touched and uncomfortable. “...I’ve just got to say that I’m proud of you. You’re really taking the bull by the horns here. You know, I love this company. I’ve done my own stint in the corporate world and I wouldn’t be sitting here with you if I didn’t love what I’m doing. And the qualities I see in you help to keep me inspired. I thank you for that.”

Mitch swallowed the lump in his throat. He knew he should feel uplifted, but mostly he felt as if he were supporting the weight of his own heavy façade and wasn’t sure how much longer he could sustain it.

On the way back to his own office, he rounded the corner and nearly ran into Graham.

“Whoa, heads up, Tiger! Hey, perfect timing! You, me. On the patio in an hour. You’ll love today’s lunch special!” Graham said without ever slowing. His energy never ceased to amaze Mitch. Spinning on his heels without ever missing a beat he added, “Be there!” Mitch mused that he should have been an ice skater, at least maybe a somewhat portly Disney on Ice character. *Maybe Piglet*, he thought, thankful for the slight smile he felt come over his face.

“I give you Carne D’Espeto with Piri Piri sauce!” Graham announced as Mitch joined him on the patio. Mitch inhaled and turned his face to the warm sun; it was a welcome change from the dreary weather of late. He sat down and dove in.

“This is great! One of these days, I’m gonna go with you when you visit and give my personal regards to your Mama, the original chef. Good old Cape Cod. Hell, we should scoop her up and all

take a trip directly to Portugal."

"Maybe that's one trip that you and your wife could actually take *together*." Graham said intentionally. He got *the look* from Mitch and changed the subject. "So how goes the coaching? And don't give me a pat answer; I know something's up because you haven't yet given me your usual great-but-too-much-garlic-tirade."

Mitch sat back and updated Graham on the in-person 360 interviews. "Then there's this damn... manifesto thing. She wants me to, you know, 'dig down, address my deepest desires, the things I love, my unrequited passions,'" Mitch said mockingly, making quotation marks in the air with his fingers. "I mean, I feel like I should be at some retreat in the woods, sitting in a circle and singing songs! In fact, maybe I'll call up Peter Yarrow and we could write a tune or two about my soul's journey! Together we'll bring folk music to the corporate world! It's a whole new market!" Mitch paused, and Graham just listened. "That was the part where you were supposed to laugh," Mitch said, trying to lighten it up a bit.

"I'll laugh if you say something funny. Have you told Anna about the coaching yet?"

"I'm waiting for the right time. And when it comes right down to it—here I go repeating myself **yet again!**—my personal and professional lives are distinctly separate," Mitch said, exasperated.

When Graham pushed away his plate, Mitch knew he was angry. Graham never pushed away food. "Look, Mitch, I'm not gonna pussyfoot around this issue any longer and I'm not gonna bullshit you with my witticisms, clever though they are." He leaned toward Mitch and looked him directly in the eye. "Do you know why this manifesto thing scares you?"

Mitch rolled his eyes, but heard Kate's words echoing in his head.

"It scares you because you know damn well you can't write it with your brain. You have to write it with your heart. It's like falling in love; you don't fall in love using just your brain. It takes heart and instinct. And it takes heart and instinct to create a life that you fall in love with, too, and that life includes your work. And when you do that, it shows. People respond to you before you even say a word."

The patio suddenly felt way too bright and way too warm for Mitch. And it was too quiet for way too long.

Jonathan suddenly burst through the door. "Ahhhhh, authentic home-cookin! Nice! You can always count on Graham for the real stuff!"

Mitch stirred uneasily in his chair, suddenly aware that Anna had been watching him looking at

the boys through the floor to ceiling windows in the family room. She finally went upstairs, and he set down his paper and turned his attention back to his sons. It was Saturday morning, and they were kicking around the soccer ball in the yard. Again, he felt nostalgic for the confidence he'd had back in the day. The boys had it. He could see it. The longer he watched them, though, the more he realized it was more than confidence, but it was also more than he could describe. He watched them run and dribble around one another and kick in some goals. Zoe just didn't seem to understand that she'd never get her snout around that ball; her innocent tenacity made Mitch smile. The boys laughed, they stomped their feet, they yelled at each other, they pushed each other, they jumped and raised their hands in joyous victory when they scored. He sipped his coffee and tried to remember when his own emotions had run such a gamut, let alone in such a short period of time.

Anna went to run a last minute errand. Later, she was taking the boys to her parents' house for the weekend, "just to get away for a bit," she'd told Mitch. As soon as she left, Mitch ambled out to the yard. "Hey guys," he said.

"Hi, Dad," said Kyle with his 12-year old enthusiasm. Daniel gave him a nod. He was fourteen, and Mitch joked with him day by day about what was up with his dwindling vocabulary of grunts and nods. He tried to call Zoe over, but she ignored him, running back and forth between her playmates. When the ball accidentally shot his way, Mitch caught it.

As he drop-kicked it back to Kyle, he asked, "Hey, can I play?"

Without a second thought, Kyle replied, "Dad, you don't play, you watch!" and turned his attention back to his brother.

The ball may as well have hit him directly in the gut. "No, I ..." Then he realized that he had nothing to add to that statement. Kyle was right. That's exactly what he did. He watched. No more. Sometimes less. He turned and went back into the house.

Anna and the boys piled into their Volvo wagon. Mitch moved close to Anna's face and said to them all, "I love you guys." Anna put her hand on the side of his unshaven face and said, "I love you, too, Mitchell." The breathiness in her voice and the sadness in her big green eyes made his knees weaken a bit. Afraid of what she might see in his own eyes, he looked down, stepped back, and watched them pull away.

Not wanting to admit to himself that he had no idea what to do with the rest of the day, Mitch grabbed some juice from the fridge and opened up the Entertainment section of the newspaper. He caught himself tapping out a tune that was stuck in his head. He couldn't name it or even recall the lyrics, but it had been haunting him since the previous weekend. He headed to his office/

den to make some headway on the pending shipping account that would hang in the balance after Maxy left.

As the sun went down, Mitch remembered the manifesto and his Monday afternoon deadline, a thought that gave him a sudden and undeniable hankering for a martini. While conceding that he'd love to write it in an absolute blackout state, he figured he'd better be clear headed. *Jeez!* he thought. *Richard Burton made a slew of films that he barely remembers and I can't allow myself one stinkin' martini over a writing assignment.* I'm a dork! he concluded, borrowing a term from Daniel's vocabulary.

Deciding he'd allow himself another indulgence, he ordered a pizza and a liter of Coke and sat down to watch Coppola's "Rumble Fish," one of his favorites. High on junk food and good cinema, Mitch was feeling pretty self-satisfied. Then, out of the blue, the rogue-ish "Motorcycle Boy," one of the main characters, said, "If you're gonna lead people, you gotta have somewhere to go." Mitch didn't even notice the next two minutes of the film. He finally clicked pause and resisted the temptation to look over both shoulders, sure to see apparitions of both Kate and Graham. *Damn it! I can't go anywhere or do anything without this leadership/coaching crap biting me in the ass!* He got up and headed to the den. *That does it! It's time!*

Mitch thought some tunes would be good in the background, but after perusing his wall of CD's, decided he didn't own any "spill your guts" theme music, so he just went with whatever was in the 5-disc changer. He turned on his laptop, but it felt too mechanical. By the time he found some notebook paper, grabbed a pen and sat there idly stroking the top of Zoe's head and recollecting conversations and events that had brought him to this point, he was at the end of a Rolling Stones CD. "Wild Horses" was one of his and Anna's favorites. He was singing it and thinking of the look in her eyes before she left and wishing he could pour some wine and take her to bed when a new CD popped on. He recognized the song instantly as the one that had been ringing in his subconscious for the last week. It was from some soundtrack that Anna had bought after a movie night with the girls. *Chick flick, chick song,* he thought. Not his style. He reached for the remote, when the lyrics themselves caught his ear.

Staring at the blank page before you
Open up the dirty window
Let the sun illuminate the words that you could not find
Reaching for something in the distance
So close you can almost taste it
Release your inhibitions
Feel the rain on your skin
No one else can feel it for you
Only you can let it in

No one else, no one else
Can speak the words on your lips
Drench yourself in words unspoken
Live your life with arms wide open
Today is where your book begins
The rest is still unwritten
I break tradition, sometimes my tries, are outside the lines
We've been conditioned to not make mistakes, but I can't live that way...
(Natasha Bedingfield, "Unwritten")

At the end of the song, the remote was still in his hand. He turned off the stereo and noticed the silence in his home. It occurred to him that he'd never really heard it before. *Where have I been?* he thought and then wondered what else he'd missed. Mitch put pen to paper and began to write words that weren't part of a business plan or communication for the first time in over twenty years.

So, I guess I'm supposed to write this as some sort of free-writing thing. Not pick up the pen, just let it flow. Well, I guess the first thing I can say is that they (has anyone ever decided who "they" are?) say your entire life flashes before you in the few fleeting seconds before you die. What if your entire life flashes before you when you're pressured into writing a manifesto, you're longing for a martini with bleu cheese stuffed olives, you've eaten an entire medium pizza by yourself (after telling yourself you'd save half for the kids), you've just drunk enough Coke to dissolve a porterhouse steak in a matter of hours, you've just been blasted by one stinking line that you never paid much attention to before in a film that you've seen half a dozen times, and some stupid pop song that your wife loves sends you reeeeeeeellllling. What does that say about you? Hell if I know...

Well, okay first to the questions that Kate presented: What pisses me off? Weak coffee. Packaged, shitty chocolate chip cookies. Call me a momma's boy, but I was spoiled! And call me old fashioned and bass-ackwards, but I sometimes wish that Anna was more of a homebody. She cooks great, healthy meals for us...with the help of our housekeep/nanny/chef. Sometimes I feel like my home isn't even my home, you know? Sometimes I just want my wife and kids all to myself. Yeah, I'm proud of Anna and her company. She kicks ass professionally and runs this home and takes awesome care of the boys AND keeps herself in amazing shape. It's just all a little overwhelming sometimes. I'd just like things to be simpler in that arena. Every once in a while, a plate of fried chicken, bedtime for the boys, and a little more lingerie would do me just fine. Where'd that come from? I sound like my grandfather! I better change the subject. I guess other things that piss me off include closed minded, judgmental people. Hmmmm...Stephen comes to mind. That blue-blooded, manicured bore. There's gotta be more to him than that bullshit, doesn't there? What else? Ah, yes...anyone who even looks sideways at my children. I can't even go there. God, I love those boys.

What lights me up? Wow...well, creativity, music, theater, film, comedy, good wine, seamed stock-

ings on a great pair of legs. I love my secret little forays into Chicago's comedy clubs when I'm there on business. God, if I had a sudden stroke or something and died while sitting there in the back row, Anna would wonder what the hell I'd been doing there. I think of that every single time... I love a great line from an actor in a film who knows how not to give too much away. I love to laugh. I love to make people laugh. One of these days, I wanna go to the Napa Valley Wine Auction. Visit the Coppola estate. One evening while we're there I want to go to one of the winemaker dinners... Anna and I will be dressed to kill...and did I mention the seamed stockings?...those would be for Anna, of course.

Who would I die for? No question, no hesitation. Anna and the boys. Enough said. But it would really piss me off to die. I would hate to leave this place before I do something bigger. What am I supposed to be doing? Is it this manifesto? Is it even something in this country? What will I be remembered for? Will the boys think of me as a great father? Will Anna think of me as her wonderful husband? Shouldn't I be more?

What do I stand for in the world? Jeez, I don't know. I'm no Gandhi. I'm just a guy who runs a company. And I'm funny. I'm very funny. Well maybe not VERY funny, but certainly clever and witty.

Mitch dropped the pen for a minute and cracked his knuckles, not used to writing long-hand like this. Suddenly, he was very thirsty, but decided not to let himself get distracted.

Okay, so now what? Am I supposed to write about all of those details that came in my life-that-flashed-before-me? All of those bits and pieces of memories? 45 or so years' worth? 5 pages. I have to write 5 pages. What the hell am I doing? I'm a grown man sitting alone in my den writing about my life. Aren't I just supposed to be living it at this point? Isn't this back-tracking just a bit????!! Oh, wait, that's right... I don't live my life; I merely "approach" it, unlike Graham, who is "actively engaged" in his life. I think that's how he put it. Arrogant bastard. No, I love the guy, but the stuff he pulls out sometimes. You don't miss a thing I say.

Hard as he tried to keep the writing flow going, Mitch couldn't help but be distracted by all of the thoughts that were connecting and firing in his mind. He recalled what Graham had said yesterday about him avoiding using his heart and instinct. He clenched his teeth for a moment but then swallowed a lump in his throat and ran his hand through his hair. He clicked the remote and listened to the song again.

I just played the song again. The last time that I listened to a song over and over and over again was after Dan died. I've never written about it before, except for that one stupid script I started and never finished. "Strong Enough." That's what I called it. Not very creative, I guess. Shit, Dan was only 16. My soccer buddy and a cinema geek, just like me. I'll never forget what his dad said to me in the hospital. "He just wasn't strong enough to survive." That really fucked with me. After the funeral, I remember, I rode my bike down to Licorice Pizza to buy the Fleetwood Mac album. Ha! Album! Vinyl! Gotta love

the old skool stuff. I listened to "Say You Love Me" over and over again. It had been playing on the radio the night mom told me Dan had been in the accident. Every time I listened to it, I told myself I'd never be as weak as Dan. I'd be strong enough to survive. Maybe that means I've missed some opportunities to let my guard down every now and then. Maybe I've set myself up. Maybe now when I let my guard down people don't know who the hell I am. My wife sure doesn't. Maybe I don't even know.

This song from tonight, from Anna's CD...there's a line in it that says, "We've been conditioned not to make mistakes, but I can't live that way..." God. How many decisions have I made in my life because I was afraid of making a mistake? I don't even know. But there were some big ones. Some major decisions. Afraid of what Dad would say to me and to Mom if I didn't live up to his expectations. What, I couldn't help bake him a damned birthday cake? I was five, for god's sake! He was what?...ashamed of his boy? Well, sure. That became obvious. No impersonations allowed! Don't have any spontaneous fun, now! Don't do anything outside the realm of what Dad considers respectable, Son. I guess those weren't his actual words, but he sure as hell implied them. And I bought it hook, line, and sinker. I certainly lived up to those expectations now, didn't I!?

Mitch had forgotten how much he loved these late night hours. Writing late at night reminded him of his late teens and earliest college years, years when he was still embracing the possibilities of his own endeavors. He was on a roll. He spent another page writing about his earliest creative bents. Watching old comedies with his maternal grandfather and doing impersonations with his hats and canes. Writing and directing plays and, as he got older, film shorts for him and the neighborhood kids—during summers while Dad was at work or away on business trips. And then there was Dad's hospitalization 10 years ago.

So I walk into the hospital room. There's my mom and my two older sisters. And there's Dad. Loopy as hell on pain meds. He opens his arms and asks for a "big old hug for your old man!" and proceeds to tell the nurse what a "goddamned creative genius" his son is. "Funny as hell, this kid!" he says and goes on to tell her about the ingenious short films I made as a kid and how I should be living in Spielberg's mansion! I didn't know he even knew about the films! Later found out Mom showed him. I was furious!!! How dare he catch me off guard like that and turn my whole perceptions of...of...I don't know...everything...upside down! I felt betrayed, I guess. God, I was a kid when I made the decisions that I thought he'd be proud of. And then he turns them around on me!?

Of course, he didn't remember anything about that incident and I'd never mention it. But what if I had gone to film school? I've still got my UCLA application in my old "Citizen Kane" script. Hilarious! Or stupid, I guess. And Rory. Whatever happened to Rory? She's probably living in LA or NY, living my dream with the open support and pride of her parents. And even if they hadn't been, knowing her, she would've had the balls to do what she wanted, anyway. Unlike me.

So where does all this put me now?...how am I supposed to keep writing when I don't know what the

hell to say. I've got a wife and kids that I love, of course. I'd do anything in the world for them. Wouldn't I? And I've got a job that I also love. Or do I? I've unearthed these questions and they're sitting right out there in the bright light, just ready for examination. To what end? To what end?

Mitch got up to make that long-overdue martini. On his way to the kitchen, he let Zoe out into the backyard. He remembered the boys playing there the morning before and realized something. That gamut of emotions that he had seen in them and wondered about in himself, it was there now, sitting right there in his gut, in all of its raw pain and glory.

DIGGING

“Who had I become? Just another shark in a suit?”

On a corporate trip, two days after uttering these words, Jerry Maguire, who is a high profile professional sports agent in the movie *Jerry Maguire*, has a breakdown...an emotional event that paves the way for him to create a breakthrough in his life. You see, he could not escape the one simple fact: “He hated his place in the world.” He had become all consumed with making money, attracting massive numbers of professional athletes as clients and losing his passion, creativity and his very self in the process.

Jerry has so much to say and no one to say it to, so what does he do? He writes a very provocative mission statement. It is not a memo, but rather 25 pages of emotionally charged ideas about what he wants for the future of his company, SMI (Sports Management International). He seizes the moment and simply writes and writes some more. When he’s done, the pages are filled with memories of his passion for the sports industry, simple pleasures of his job, the sounds of the stadium when an athlete succeeds, his own dreams as a young man, what was most important in life and why he had wanted to be a sports agent in the first place.

The story of Jerry Maguire is not unlike what Mitchell James experiences in this chapter. Mitch goes through both a breakdown and a breakthrough. He cannot escape the fact that he is not satisfied with his place in his family, in the world at large or within the walls of Global Trade Management, and he begins to dig deeply into his life by writing his personal manifesto. What starts out as a struggle-laden piece of homework assigned by Kate becomes pages and pages of deeply rooted thoughts, emotions and passions about his life. He reconnects with his creativity and what was most important in life, what ticked him off, the death of his best friend, hearing the words of Graham, Kate, Anna and his father. In doing so, he opens the door to reconciling his life with them.

In coaching leaders, one of the first assignments I ask my clients to take on is to write their personal manifesto. I request that my clients take this project on with passion, that they not censor their thoughts and that they write and write until they pour the most important things about their lives onto the blank pages. Journaling is powerful and can provide leaders with a point of reconnection, a forum where they can get back in touch with what truly lights them up, what ticks them off, what they feel passionately about, what irks them and what they are willing to die for. I have discovered that, if leaders cannot take on this activity with passion and be honest with themselves about who they truly are, they usually do not grow in their leadership role.

BONUS: We invite you, as a reader of *Edge*, to start Digging into your personal manifesto. As a way to get you started, Andy Wibbels, author of *BLOG Wild!* has opened a private blog area for you to begin this process: <http://www.Edge-book.com/bonus>. As you are writing, answer the following coaching questions.

- What are you most passionate about in life?
- What are you most passionate about in business?
- What is it in life that really ticks you off?
- What is it in your business or company that really ticks you off?
- What are you most excited about in the world of leadership?
- What is it about the world of leadership that really ticks you off?
- When no one is looking, what do you love doing?
- What is something about you that most people don't know about? What is it that has you keep this a secret?
- If you could start your professional life all over again, what would you be doing?
- If you could change one thing in the world, what would you change? How would you go about changing it?
- If you had \$1 million to give to a cause, what would you give it to and why?
- If your life stays just as it is today, would you have any regrets? If so, what would they be?
- What do you really want for the rest of your life?
- When you are 95, and you are looking back on your life, what do you want to say was your biggest accomplishment?

Buy the book!