



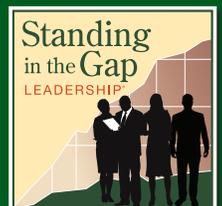
The **4A's** of **Leadership**[®] *for business*



Practical Principles to Help Leaders Build and Sustain
Growth for the Business They are Fortunate to Lead

By David A. Esposito

Harvest Time
Partners



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The 4 A's of Leadership for Business

Introduction

"How did you go bankrupt?" Bill asked. "Two ways," Mike said. "Gradually and then suddenly." The dialogue is from Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel, *The Sun Also Rises*.

In many ways that theme can describe the journey of a number of businesses from modern day multi-national corporations to small- and medium-sized family businesses. We all get a little too comfortable when things are going well and it seems okay to put off until tomorrow what should be addressed today. And then it happens.

- **What was once local competition has now gone global overnight.**
- **What was once a steady distribution system has now been flattened by online ordering and same-day delivery.**
- **What was once a high-margin product line has now been digitized and made available online for free.**
- **What was once a loyal, single-minded workforce has now been replaced with one of a short-term, contractual mindset that drags along a side-hustle business while dreaming about the next big thing.**
- **What was once a generational goal for a steady career with a single company has now become pure fantasy.**

Our business environment continues to grow in complexity, intensity, and uncertainty. Incredible success and growth can turn into layoffs and shutdowns in months or a few years instead of a few decades like a generation before.

Despite the most competitive environment in human history, there is one truth we cannot escape;

Leadership is the oxygen for any organization to sustain health and growth in the global marketplace.

The 4As of Leadership for business is a practical and straightforward approach to guide organizations to reach their full potential in a hypercompetitive world. Effective leadership stands in the gap between healthy and thriving organizations and those that stumble along the path to self-destruction and insolvency.

The 4As of Leadership for business contains a set of principles that are universal, timeless, and relevant to businesses of all types competing in a variety of markets. The principles symbolize a compass that will always define an effective direction whether in the fog of a confusing and complicated market or in the beginning of a journey such as a product launch or new business venture.

The principles contained in **the 4As of Leadership for business** will also act as a compass for your own leadership journey to build a great team.

As leaders and builders of the next generation of innovative businesses, we must provide strong leadership to the people who get the work done day in and day out on our teams. My hope is that **the 4As of Leadership for business** can provide a small degree of positive change in your ability to lead as we both continue on the important journey to serve our teams and set a strong example for others to follow.

I wish you all the best on your leadership journey. Please reach out to me if you need any help.

Sincerely,



David Esposito
Managing Partner
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Alignment

The **Principle of Alignment** reinforces the importance of setting strategic direction and the strength gained through a clear, well-understood purpose that can channel an organization's energy to deliver over the long term.

The **Principle of Alignment** reminds leaders to clearly answer the critical questions that define the organization's reason for existing:

- What is the **Purpose** of our organization?
- What is the **Why** that energizes us and makes our purpose important and relevant to the marketplace?
- **Who** are we serving in the marketplace?
- What are the core **Values** that guide our conduct?

These critical questions need to be answered in the context of the entire organization. They are not specific to one product or brand. These questions provide the essential purpose and direction for the organization.

Many organizations make an obligatory, textbook effort at publishing a Vision-Mission-Values type of framework. This formulaic process consistently falls short of the needed spirit and intent to clearly answer these critical business questions and energetically guide the people building the business. The ability to clearly answer these critical questions with verbiage and images that are memorable and inspiring is foundational to the long-term health of the business.

Consistent, clear, and repetitive communication is the only proven sustainable process to drive alignment overtime. Over communicating about the answers to the critical questions forms the guardrails that ensure the organization remains aligned to the strategic



“Hard work and talent are not sustainable without purpose and direction”

direction. Effective communication is a renewable energy source to keep the organization headed in the direction set forth by the leadership team.

Below are a few reminders to leverage effective communication in support of the **Principle of Alignment**:

- 1. Set the Example:** Leaders must walk the talk of the organization day in and day out. Team members must see leaders living the values of the organization.
- 2. Speak the Direction:** Leaders need to weave into every-day meetings, one-on-one conversations, group discussions and presentations, the vernacular of the company's answers to the critical questions.
- 3. Written Communication:** Leaders should leverage written communications to reinforce the answers to these critical questions. Consistently interjecting the words and images that are helpful reminders should be a part of written communications, slide decks, routine notes, etc.
- 4. Routine Performance Reviews:** Daily, weekly, monthly, and year-end performance discussions around key objectives need to be laced with the language that answers these strategic questions. An important component is to incorporate the details of the “why” and the “how” that each individual's performance contributes to delivering on the critical questions.
- 5. Pay and Benefits:** Aligning a portion of compensation and benefits to the execution plan of delivering on the critical questions will provide further reinforcement over time. When annual pay and benefit changes are implemented at the individual and team level, the results and rationale for the changes needs to be provided in the context of how people and teams delivered on the answers to the critical questions.

In order to be most effective on the pathway to achieve **Alignment** within an organization, leaders need to be vigilant in reinforcing the answers to the critical questions that guide the organization.



The Principle of Alignment – Practical Exercise:

Most companies have routinely attempted to answer these critical questions during times of leadership change, when addressing a turn-around narrative after consistently poor performance, or at least on routine annual updates to their organizations.

Below are a few practical steps for leaders to assess the effectiveness of achieving alignment within their teams:

- 1.** Leadership self-assessment. Leaders need to routinely assess their effectiveness in consistently weaving into their activities the vocabulary and images that reinforce the direction of the organization:
 - Set the Example: What specific examples demonstrate that I walk the talk and live the values of our organization?
 - Speak the Direction: What “talking points” do I use during routine discussions help to reinforce our direction?
 - Written Communication: Review recent communications to see the language being reinforced. Do my written communications reflect our direction?
 - Routine Performance Reviews: How am I weaving the company’s vocabulary around the critical questions into the assessment of performance on a routine basis?
 - Pay and Benefits: What examples demonstrate how I effectively recognize and reward performance based on execution that is in line with the direction of our organization?
- 2.** At the next routine staff meeting or one-on-one discussion, simply ask people in attendance:
 - How do you describe what we do and why we do it?
 - Who are the customers we serve?
 - When someone at your next family holiday gathering asks you what it is like to work for your company, what do you say?
 - What are the objectives we use to assess our progress in achieving our direction?

Written surveys and/or having an outside third party administer focus groups can be effective ways to assess alignment with the organization.

Consistently delivering on the **Principle of Alignment** is critical to achieving above-trend performance in the marketplace.



Assignment

The **Principle of Assignment** reminds us of the importance of serving a purpose larger than ourselves.

We all have a role to play to help a business succeed in delivering on key milestones along the path to sustainable growth.

Once the overall direction of the organization has been established with the **Principle of Alignment**, then the process begins to align business units, teams, and individuals to develop objectives that support delivering on the strategic direction of the organization. The building blocks of “who does what, when it needs to be done, and why it will help us succeed” need to be integrated to ensure there are people and teams assigned to get the work done.

Assigning tasks to specific teams or individuals addresses the reality that “if everyone is accountable, then no one is accountable.” Individuals and teams need to feel the weight of a specific assigned task.

The **Principle of Assignment** is a strong reminder that strategic thinking and direction (the **Principle of Alignment**) are great skills, but without competent leadership to determine critical tasks, build realistic timelines, assign the work, and lead the work, execution will always falter.

Leaders must implement both principles to optimize execution. Today’s leaders can’t just think about outlining the big story and then hand off execution to someone else. Effectively leading the combined disciplines of strategy and execution is the hallmark of effective leaders in businesses succeeding in today’s hypercompetitive, global marketplace.

Developing and assigning critical tasks is best implemented as a combined effort of a top-down (executive leadership) and bottom-up (individuals and teams) planning process. Leaders and teams

collectively building the objectives and critical tasks, timelines, and key results that outline the measures of success can ensure the business delivers on its purpose.

The process of developing and assigning critical tasks is transparent and visible for all to see. The tasks, who owns them, and the timelines to deliver are posted on the wall outside the “corner” office, the walls of the common areas, and the fabric wall outside each cubicle so that everyone knows what his/her role is, what part he/she plays, and who owns delivering on each critical task.

There are plenty of commonly used frameworks to develop and assign objectives and critical tasks. In review of a few models, the below outlines some important principles:

- 1. SMART:** Objectives should align with a SMART-type framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound)
- 2. Transparent:** Objectives and critical tasks are transparent at all levels. Transparency fuels cooperation and teamwork, which will be essential to deliver on the tasks.
- 3. Ongoing Assessment:** The review of objectives and performance is ongoing (daily, weekly, monthly) compared to just during an annual performance assessment. The consistent, open discussion of assigned objectives acts like a hidden force pulling individuals and teams to higher achievement.

Similar to the **Principle of Alignment**, communication is the renewable energy needed to ensure critical tasks remain relevant and top-of-mind for individuals and teams. Consistent communication by leaders leveraging the **Principle of Assignment** will act to hammer out non-essential work and grind from teams in order to free up energy to deliver on their objectives.

“The Principles of Assignment and Accountability are the foundation to link strategy to execution.”



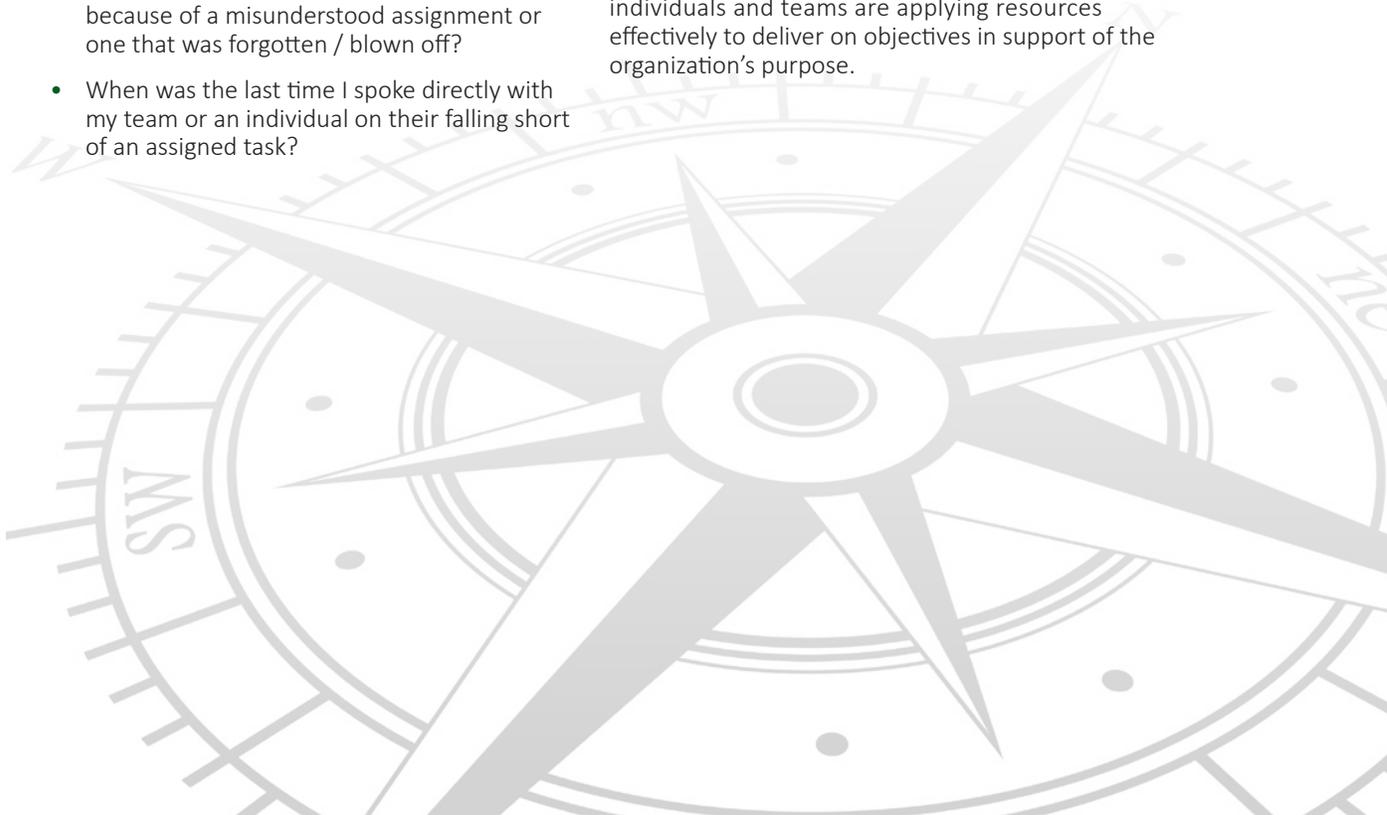
The Principle of Assignment – Practical Exercise:

Most companies have a routine process to assign team and individual objectives and critical tasks.

Below are a few practical steps for leaders to assess the effectiveness of executing on the **Principle of Assignment** within their teams:

- 1.** Leadership self-assessment. Leaders need to routinely assess their effectiveness in assigning tasks and the ongoing communication process to ensure the tasks are understood and acted upon:
 - When was the last time I spoke specifically with my team or an individual about their assigned critical tasks and their performance? (a few days ago, several weeks ago, a few months ago, or was it just at the beginning of the year when we made an attempt to assign some objectives?)
 - Do I use routine interactions with my team or individuals to leverage some time to discuss critical tasks?
 - When was the last time I had a difficult and stressful conversation with a team member because of a misunderstood assignment or one that was forgotten / blown off?
 - When was the last time I spoke directly with my team or an individual on their falling short of an assigned task?
- 2.** At the next routine staff meeting or one-on-one discussion, simply ask the following questions:
 - What are the key objectives for our team (or you as an individual) this quarter or this year?
 - What objective is keeping you up at night?
 - What critical tasks are guiding our / your progress on achieving the key objectives?
 - Who are you reaching out to for support in delivering on our / your assigned tasks?
 - What are the rewards for delivering on the assigned tasks?

Continuing to assess the **Principle of Assignment** within an organization is critical to ensure individuals and teams are applying resources effectively to deliver on objectives in support of the organization's purpose.





Accountability

The **Principle of Accountability** reinforces that we all are personally responsible for completing our tasks and supporting others to ensure the organization's milestones are met.

Holding individuals and teams accountable for key objectives is not just for an annual performance review. The **Principle of Accountability** should be an ongoing, continual discussion to ensure:

- **Consistency and Clarity:** The objectives for the team/individuals and their current performance, need to remain crystal clear to ensure there are no surprises on performance expectations.
- **Identification of Early Warning Signals:** The current performance (positive or negative) toward stated objectives may be an early indication of a change in effort by an individual/team or a fundamental shift in the external environment.
- **Efficient Course Correction:** We are never perfect in setting objectives. Consistent, transparent discussions on performance through the **Principle of Accountability** can well position leaders to adjust plans and address market changes in real time to take advantage of an opportunity or prevent a problem from getting worse.

Most leaders and organizations struggle with the **Principle of Accountability**. Just the thought of having a difficult discussion with an underperforming team or individual brings about some degree of anxiousness and trepidation.

An additional cause of concern for many leaders is when the underperformer is a new employee, an employee approaching retirement age, an employee of an under-represented group, or an employee who is a close relation to a senior leader in the business or marketplace.

Regardless of the challenges of having difficult discussions around performance, adherence to the **Principle of Accountability** is critical to ensure the organization functions at a high level of effectiveness.

Here are a few guideposts to ensure leaders are well positioned to have important and consistent conversations on the accountability of teams and individuals to deliver on their objectives:

“Overcoming the initial temptation to retreat from a difficult conversation is a critical discipline for leaders.”

1. **Clarity:** Ensure the key results/measures of success (“what good looks like”) for the objectives and critical tasks assigned have been clearly and consistently communicated.
2. **Coach and Support:** Leaders should position themselves as a coach to help and serve teams/individuals to deliver on their objectives. Helping to identify where support may be needed and connect the team to resources to help is a key role of a supportive leader.
3. **Two-way Dialogue:** Leaders need to facilitate adequate time in an open, two-way dialogue to accurately diagnosis the problem and collectively war-game the steps to getting things back on track. The marketplace has become infinitely more complex and the potential for several external factors that impact underperformance is real. However, leaders need to ensure that marketplace complexity does not become a convenient excuse for underperformance.
4. **Team Discussion:** Opening up performance discussions with a larger team can be very effective to support improved teamwork and coordination and to more efficiently hold individuals accountable as the effect of peer pressure can bring about clarity on the underlying performance issues.
5. **Next Steps:** Build alignment around next steps to ensure the execution gets back on track and ensure follow-up is efficient.

Leaders who develop the courage to adhere to the **Principle of Accountability** will encourage the rest of the team to hold themselves accountable, which will enable a high-functioning team to deliver on their objectives.





The Principle of Accountability – Practical Exercise:

Most leaders and organizations struggle with effectively implementing the **Principle of Accountability** because it is hard to have difficult and timely discussions with underperformers. In addition, the complex and fast-moving marketplace can provide a host of potential excuses for underperforming.

Below are a few practical steps for leaders to assess the effectiveness of executing on the **Principle of Accountability** within their teams:

- 1.** Leadership self-assessment. Leaders need to routinely assess their effectiveness in supporting their teams and holding them accountable to deliver on key tasks:
 - When was the last time I spoke specifically with my team or an individual about underperforming on an objective?
 - When was the last time I failed to follow-up on a specific next step with an underperforming team or individual?
 - When I had a difficult discussion with an underperforming team member: (a) Did we collectively diagnose the problem? (b) What were the specific problems driving the underperformance? (c) Did we work together to develop an action plan and agree to a specific follow-up plan? (d) Did I follow-up on the action plan?
- 2.** At the next routine staff meeting or one-on-one discussion, lead a discussion on some of the below topics:
 - Review one objective that the team is delivering above expectations on. What is driving the above-expectations performance? Can it be transferred to other action items?
 - Review one objective that the team is underperforming on. What is driving the under-performance? What are some key steps to take to turn around the performance?
 - Ask for a few individuals to discuss their performance on a particular objective and whether those learnings can be transferred to others.

Developing the discipline to adhere to the **Principle of Accountability** is critical to ensure individuals and teams are focused on executing on the objectives necessary to support the business achieving its full potential.



Affirmation

The **Principle of Affirmation** enables us to meet the deepest need in each one of us—to know that we belong and we matter.

Conversations are the critical connection point for individuals to feel affirmed in who they are and the role they play. The **Principle of Affirmation** positions leaders to view each conversation with team members as an opportunity to show they matter as individuals and team members, which will create engagement and commitment to enable the organization to reach its full potential.

Initially framing conversations to acknowledge the positive contributions of individuals enables a deeper connection and an openness to listen to drive change. First affirming someone's worth and unique contributions to the team and/or to you personally as a leader forms a foundation for trust and transparency, which is essential for long-term organizational health.

Leaders need to prioritize time to address the positive contributions of individuals and teams. In our hypercompetitive marketplace with constant paranoia of disruptive threats, most leaders jump to the urgency of problems and underperformance, which over time will create an unhealthy environment where top talent will leave or become disengaged.

Below are a few practical reminders for leaders to deliver on the **Principle of Affirmation**:

1. Do It Now: There is always some other pressing, urgent need, but leaders need to take the time, in the moment to catch people doing things right

and to recognize the small, daily acts of sacrifice and commitment being demonstrated by team members. Recognizing these small steps will help build a strong work force to remain committed when the real challenges hit.

2. Be Genuine: Leaders need to provide specifics and demonstrate a knowledge of what they are recognizing to be most effective. A big smile and “you are doing a great job” can become nauseating over time without specifics and a heart-felt gesture.

3. Leverage a Variety of Opportunities: Leaders should leverage the **Principle of Affirmation** in written communications, one-on-one meetings, team meetings, and in the casual encounter in the hallway.

4. Recognize Others, not Yourself: Leaders should take the opportunity to provide thoughtful recognition of team members—instead of speaking of their own efforts—in front of senior leaders in the organization.

Leaders who genuinely and consistently deliver on the **Principle of Affirmation** will create an environment for others to believe in themselves, see their efforts adding value to the organization, and strengthen engagement and commitment that are so needed to support the long-term health of the organization.



“Affirming someone’s worth and unique contributions forms a foundation for trust and transparency which are essential for long term organizational health.”



The Principle of Affirmation – Practical Exercise:

Studies would show that most leaders and organizations fall short of consistently providing the affirmation that individuals seek to feel appreciated and supported in their role with the organization.

Below are a few practical steps for leaders to assess their effectiveness in executing on the **Principle of Affirmation** within their teams:

- 1.** Leadership self-assessment. Leaders need to routinely assess their effectiveness in delivering on the **Principle of Affirmation** with their teams:
 - When was the last time during a one-on-one meeting with an individual team member that I specifically acknowledged the value that team member brings to the team?
 - When was the last time I recognized the specific efforts of individuals on my team to my boss?
 - During the most recent performance discussion with my team, what was the balance of specific points in the discussion that recognized positive examples of the values of our organization compared to negative behaviors?
 - In reviewing recent email communications, was the tone affirming positive contributions of the team or was the tone mostly negative?
- 2.** At the next routine team meeting or one-on-one discussion, lead a discussion on some of the below topics:
 - Take a genuine “temperature check” on how people are dealing with the pace of the organization. Take an opportunity to recognize those who are delivering on some specific tasks.
 - Take a moment to highlight some specific behaviors that the team is exhibiting that align to the values of the organization.
 - During one-on-one discussions, genuinely ask about what challenges individuals may be dealing with in delivering on their objectives, and spend some time outlining a plan to support their needs.

The **Principle of Affirmation** should not be dismissed as some soft skill that is not needed in the tough world of business. When leaders can connect on a very personal level with their team members and ensure they feel affirmed in their roles and contributions, leaders will best position the organization for long-term health and ensure employees remain engaged.

The Closing Reality

The marketplace will continue to get more competitive and change will continue to accelerate in the years to come.

Existing businesses with leaders who lack the courage to aggressively change to address our new reality will soon find they are out of business.

The 4A's of Leadership for business provides a framework for leaders to apply their own techniques to build long-term organizational health and financial growth for the businesses they are fortunate to lead.

The reality is that no leadership framework is perfect, and no leader is without scars from a few mistakes. The most needed characteristic of the modern-day leader is the resilience to bounce back quickly when things don't go as planned and rapid course correction is needed to address an unforeseen challenge. Resilience, in the face of a constantly changing marketplace, will enable leaders to sustain growth for the long-term.

As we continue to lead our teams to build great businesses, it is important that we stay humble in times of great success and stay committed in times of utter despair and darkness. No matter what situation we face, duty calls us to just simply keep climbing back into the ring each and every morning to set the example for others to follow.

I wish you all the best in your leadership journey. Please reach out to me if you need any help.

Sincerely,



David Esposito
Managing Partner
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Having a difficult time getting teenagers to “open-up” about dealing with their reality? Abundant Harvest for Teens & Adults can help!



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Start great conversations with Face to Face, a fast-paced, travel-ready conversation game!

As our world has become more connected...

...with things like the internet, smart phones, and social media, today's online chatter has actually caused our families to become more disconnected; and we are losing the critical life-skill of effective face-to-face communication.

Harvest Time Partners created a series of conversation games called Abundant Harvest® and Face to Face® to help families and educators open the door to more effective communication and encourage decision-making based on principles like honesty and loyalty with the intent of reinforcing the Law of the Harvest, simply, “you reap what you sow.” **Abundant Harvest and Face to Face conversation games provide parents and teachers with teachable moments and quality time with their children.**



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The Principles of Our World Children's Books



The Principle of Honesty



The Principle of Teamwork



The Principle of Sacrifice



The Principle of Courage



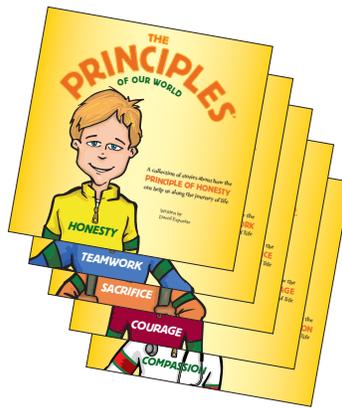
The Principle of Compassion



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Come learn about **The Principles of Our World.**

It is never too early in the development of a child to start talking about the importance of principles like honesty, courage, and teamwork. **The Principles of Our World** books provide parents and teachers with the opportunity to read to young children (ages 4+) and talk about a variety of situations they will experience in life.

For young, independent readers (ages 7+), **The Principles of Our World** book series is a great addition to their book collection.

At the end of each book, there is a section called “Where Do We Go from Here?” This section is designed for children, parents, and educators to discuss situations children will encounter in life and talk about how **The Principles of Our World** can help them effectively handle these situations.

Enjoy each book in one sitting or read just one story at a time!



Visit www.harvesttimepartners.com to learn more!

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About David Esposito

David Esposito is a seasoned healthcare executive and combat veteran. As a CEO and president, David built and scaled multiple healthcare companies that resulted in successful exits to strategic buyers (Armune BioScience, sold to Exact Sciences [EXAS] in December 2017 and Phadia US/AB, sold to Thermo Fisher Scientific [TMO] in September 2011).

Most recently, David served as CEO of Armune BioScience Inc., an early-stage cancer diagnostics company focused on developing and commercializing blood tests that leverage the immune system's response to cancer. As a result of the team's success, Armune gained the interest of numerous strategic buyers and closed a deal with Exact Sciences [EXAS] in December of 2017 to acquire core assets of the business.

Prior to leading Armune, David served as president and general manager of Phadia US Inc. from 2009-2011 (Phadia US, was the US division of privately held Phadia AB, a premier global specialty diagnostics company). David's disciplined approach to developing strategy and effective execution of strategic choices, combined with strong leadership practices that support enhanced employee engagement and teamwork, have been recognized as key contributors to the accelerated growth of the company. In addition, David spearheaded the development of several commercial initiatives to support Phadia's leadership in the area of bringing breakthrough diagnostics to the US marketplace for the allergy and autoimmune segments. The successful growth of the company culminated in the sale to Thermo Fisher Scientific [TMO] for \$3.5B USD in September of 2011. David supported the transition of the business to Thermo Fisher

Scientific in the role of Vice President for US Commercial Operations within the Specialty Diagnostics Group.

David began his career in healthcare as a sales representative with Merck & Co., Inc. Throughout his 15 years with Merck, David added value in positions of increased responsibility and played several key leadership roles for Merck in the US market.

David's leadership skills and ability to develop and articulate strategy with clear tactical discipline to drive execution were enhanced and nurtured during his 4 years at West Point and his subsequent leadership assignments in the US Army Infantry. As an Airborne Ranger Infantry officer, David led a rifle platoon of 39 men with the 101st Airborne Division in Operation Desert Shield/Storm (1990-1991) through several combat operations and was recognized with a Bronze Star for combat action on February 24, 1991.

David was born and raised in northern New Jersey. David, his wife Tracy, and their four active children, have enjoyed living in numerous areas of the country as a result of relocations for key assignments in the marketplace. They presently call Kalamazoo, MI "home." Outside of work, David is very active with his family, spending time outdoors and doing charitable work. In addition, David is the inventor/developer of a series of programs entitled Character Creates Opportunity® designed to improve the character development of children, adolescents, and adults. David and Tracy are the founders and sponsors of Harvest Time Partners Foundation; a charitable organization supporting youth and young adults in pursuit of character-building opportunities.

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