

What's Holding You Back?

THE LEADER JUMP-START GUIDE TO DO BIG THINGS

It's not uncommon to feel stuck, controlled or unfulfilled at work and that you could be more successful, only if... In our 25 years of working with leaders in Fortune 500 companies, we have observed that those who consciously decide to bring their best (no matter the circumstance), direct their focus toward the things they can control, and purposefully remove barriers to pave the way for big things to happen.

IN 2016, the Chicago Cubs knew firsthand the

pain of defeat and they knew their role in history. As players, they were connected to the 108 other Cubs teams that came before them, who had failed in achieving a World Series championship title. Entire generations of die-hard fans had lived their whole lives without seeing their beloved team achieve the ultimate recognition. These circumstances create a pressure few teams will ever know. Assigning blame would have been easy to do under such pressure. But they didn't.

At some point in our lives, it seems we all feel as though something or someone is holding us back from success, reaching a goal, gaining commitment, making a tough decision, or achieving a vision. What comes next for us is the rationale as to why we are being held back. We may have substantial evidence to blame it on a manager, a parent, the market, the system, a toxic culture or a dysfunctional team.

WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?

What if you could step away from blame for a moment and ask yourself, what do I know to be true in this situation and **what can I control?** Pausing to answer these questions is not easy, especially when you find yourself becoming increasingly distracted, hopelessly stressed and disconnected from your purpose and those close to you. You are moving fast

and trying to be true to the leader you know you can be. Those that are able to pause to identify what they can control, and let go of the rest, feel liberated

and a restored sense of self-control. Many of you deeply want to be in control of your day, your plans, of hitting that number, and ultimately your life.

In our 25 years of working with leaders in Fortune 500 companies, we have observed that the leaders who effectively answer the question, "What can I control?" do so because they pause reflect on their focus. Is it on what is *not working*, who's to *blame*, or, is it on what *is working* and *what's possible*? This thinking creates the ability for leaders to make a decision that moves them and others forward. A powerful decision to bring out their best.

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These intentional leaders draw the extraordinary out of an ordinary mindset during the most uncertain times, because they gain control over their circumstances versus falling victim. They choose greatness and are intentional about bringing their best to every interaction in every situation. As a result, a new mindset takes hold across the team because in the long run it feels better than blame. When we experience the success of leading and living with a new mindset, our brain signals, "yes, more of that please!"

CHOOSE TO BRING YOUR BEST TO THE SITUATION

In 2016 we witnessed the power of how a team chose to be great. On the night of November 2, 2016, the Cubs became bigger than baseball. They modeled for the rest of us that when we are deliberate and focused on making certain decisions, we can win. And win big. After 108 years of losing, the Chicago Cubs became the champions of baseball.¹

Game Seven will be remembered as one of the greatest games ever played in any sport. After seven months, 177 games, over 1,593 innings, and approximately 25,842 pitches, the Holy Grail of baseball—the World Series Championship—would be decided in extra innings of the last game. While you are not being asked to deliver a World Series win after 108 years of losses, there is no doubt that today's pressures, uncertainty, and the fear we face as teammates feels relative to what the Cubs felt that day.

The drama was thick. The Cubs had been down three games to one in the best of seven series, but had scrapped and clawed their way back to tie the series at three games apiece and force a deciding game seven. Then, in the winner-takes-all game, it appeared an entire city and the legion of fans around the world would be doomed again to their century-old heartache.

In that monumental game, the Cubs pulled ahead, 6–3, only to see their opponent, the Cleveland Indians, come back to tie the game in the eighth inning. The ninth inning went scoreless.

That's when time stopped. Before the game could go into the tenth inning, it began to rain. The teams retreated into their respective clubhouses. And the sporting world held its breath.

While it would have been easier for the team to blame external forces, or succumb to pressure, frustration or doubt, team veteran, Jason Heyward would have none of it. He chose not to spend time there. He chose to lead. Behind closed doors, he made the decision to bring out his best at a time when the team needed it the most. He called the team together and

contributed a perspective to his peers that activated their hearts. **"I told them to remember how good they were—how good we are,"** Heyward said after the game. **"I wanted them to know how proud of them I was and that I loved them. And that I mean it from the bottom of my heart."**¹

This was precisely the moment the Cubs collectively refocused on a critical decision that differentiated them as champions. Heyward said each of them had played a part in bringing the Cubs to this moment in time. And that they had everything they needed to win, as long as they believed in each other and played for one another.

Teammate David Ross provided more details of Heyward's efforts to activate the team. He said, "[Heyward] told us, 'We're the best team in baseball for a reason. Continue to play our game, support one another. These are your brothers here, fight for your brothers, lift them up, continue to stay positive. We've been doing this all year so continue to be us.'"^{2 3}

We call Heyward's decision at that pivotal moment

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the **Contributor Decision: / choose to bring my best to this situation.** This is one of the 3

specific decisions we've consistently observed team members make to achieve something extraordinary. These decisions represent Step 3 in the Do Big Things Framework which we outline further in our book, *Do Big Things: The Simple Steps Teams Can Take to Mobilize Hearts and Minds, and Make an Epic Impact.*

EXERCISE YOUR BARRIER BREAKING AUTHORITY

The odds were against the Cubs from the start. The team faced pressure, stigma and uncertainty during the 2016 season, but with the rally cry of "We never quit," the team collectively overcame the barriers in front of them to go on and win the World Series. We refer to this as Step 4 in the Do Big Things Framework: **Exercise Your Barrier Breaking Authority.** This is when the team determines what

stands between them and success—both real and perceived. **Then, by controlling what they can control, team members act upon their inherent authority to choose their response in daily situations.** You could say that the Cubs team exercised their barrier breaking authority throughout the entire series and all the way to the end.

YOUR ENERGY CAN LEAD YOUR TEAM TO BIG THINGS

What took place in the clubhouse during that brief and now historic 17-minute rain delay, was more than a motivational discussion. It was a decision-making process. Heyward brought the Cubs team back to the important decisions they'd been making all year. The formula for success didn't need to be changed now. As a result, the mood changed back to confidence. The team possessed a renewed determination.

He chose to lead. Behind closed doors, he made the decision to bring out his best at a time when the team needed it the most.

"We didn't know what was going to happen, but I knew we were ready to do what we did,"

Heyward said.

The team was ready. When we look at what is going on in the brain to create the ability to move forward we can see why they were ready.

They were, in effect, producing endorphins and dopamine, necessary chemicals our brain enjoys which prompts us to action.⁴ Heyward was intentional about addressing and minimizing the fear of letting this moment go (endorphins) by choosing to bring out his best.

When the leader creates this energy, it is felt and reinforced by the collective team and momentum is alive and well—and that feels good and so we want more (dopamine!) As the team was preparing to go back onto the field, hearts were pounding—not from nerves, but from the belief that they could control their fate and take this win. Catcher Willson Contreras later said that in that moment, he was thinking, "Now we are here and we can do this. We've got this."²

Indeed, they did. The Cubs scored two runs in the top of the tenth; the Indians could only manage one.

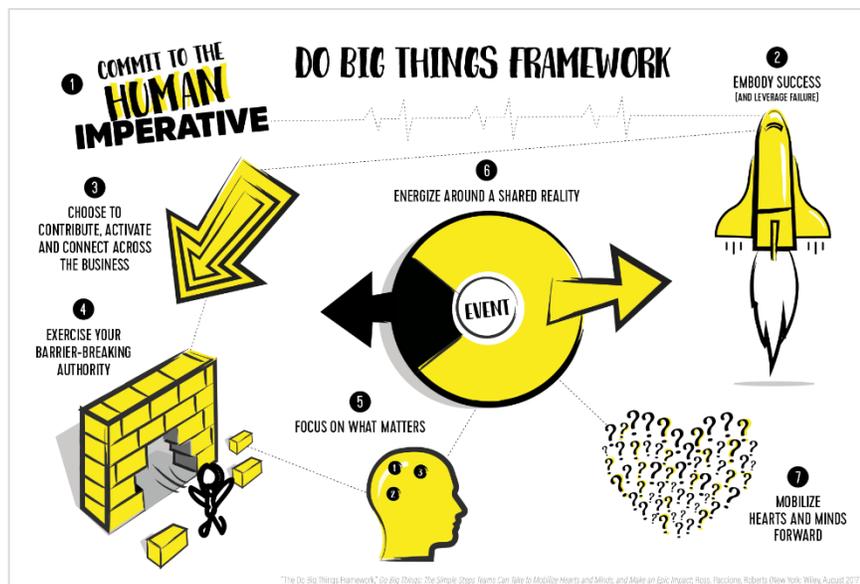
The Cubs, when it mattered most, chose to be great. And they were.³

YOUR WORK MATTERS. CHOOSE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THIS SIMPLE PLAN.

1. Make the Contributor Decision: **Choose to bring Your best to the situation.**
 - What is the bigger motivation to achieving our goals? Why does it matter?
 - What is possible?
 - Where do I have influence?
 - What is working?
 - What do I know to be true in this situation and what can I control?
2. Ask yourself, **"Where is my focus: blame or possibilities?"**
 - If my focus is on blame, what information do I need to consider before I act?
 - What do I know to be true of this situation? What do I need to move forward?
3. **Exercise your barrier-breaking authority:**
 - Come together with your team, to identify the barriers you can remove. Are they external, internal, unspoken?
 - What is your plan to remove them? You can better serve your team, your culture, and your customers by choosing to pause and to make the decision to bring your best to the situation and remove the barriers within your control. Bring your best to it and then let go of the rest.

MAKE A CHOICE. IF NOT YOU, THEN WHO WILL?

When you pause, and choose to make the Contributor Decision, it becomes much easier and efficient to choose to Activate the best in others and to Connect with others to partner across the business. Discover more about the Activator Decision and the Connector Decision and all seven steps of the Do Big Things Framework in our new book, *Do Big Things: The Simple Steps Teams Can Take to Mobilize Hearts and Minds, and Make an Epic Impact.* www.VerusGlobal.com/DoBigThings





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As an Executive Coach, Consultant, Speaker, Facilitator, Victoria is a trusted adviser and catalyst for activating the brilliance in people to achieve organizational growth. Her experience transferring cognitive behavioral psychology practices across organizational systems enables her to build lasting solutions for partners with immediate and sustainable results.

About Verus Global: We design and deliver lasting solutions that transform leaders and teams so they can have an immediate and meaningful business impact.

We started our journey 25 years ago, delivering parenting workshops, driven by a purpose to bring out the best in children by starting with parents first. When a parent recommended that we take our workshops to the organizations, we jumped at the opportunity to equip leaders and their teams to experience what was invaluable for parents.

What drives our work is an obsession of answering one question: How do you equip a team to quickly operate in a way that enables them to deliver the big thing that needs to get done?

It's not about the training event. The event is in service to something bigger. The real impact comes when teams are operating with heart and learning from each other to build collective leadership capabilities well beyond the program. We know that the heart and humanity comes first and we design with that principle in mind; and it shows up in every interaction—every day at work and at home.



We equip teams to do BIG things.™

References:

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² Nancy Armour, "Jason Heyward's Speech Spurs Cubs during World Series Game 7 Rain Delay," *USA Today*, November 3, 2016, www.usatoday.com/story/sports/mlb/cubs/2016/11/03/world-series-championship-game-7-rain-delay-jason-heyward/93226544/.

³ Craig W. Ross, Angela V. Paccione and Victoria L. Roberts, *Do Big Things: The Simple Steps Teams Can Take to Mobilize Hearts and Minds, and Make an Epic Impact* (New York: Wiley, August 2017).

⁴ Bethany Brookshire, "Dopamine Is," *Slate*, July 3, 2013, www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2013/07/what_is_dopamine_love_just_sex_addiction_gambling_motivation_reward.html.

⁵ Muskat, Carrie, "For Cubs and fans in '16, long wait over," *MLB.com*, December 28, 2016, <http://m.mlb.com/news/article/211549046/cubs-2016-season-ends-with-world-series-title/>.