

MANIFESTO

By Larry Wade

CONTENTS

Forward

Introduction

Chapter 1: Tools

Chapter 2: Communication

Chapter 3: Culture

Chapter 4: Life

Chapter 5: Leadership

FOREWORD

By Michelle Sullivan

Larry Wade called me up in the autumn of 2020 with something on his mind. He wanted to explore questions around purpose and to utilize the opportunity that the global pandemic was affording him - by putting pen to paper.

Larry's offer was creative work. He wanted to utilize the coaching framework to tell a story. To unearth his leadership story. Larry sought to assume a growth mindset, hold up a mirror and allow me to ask a lot of questions. My favorite kind - catalytic questions - the type that help us reframe a situation and make it possible to move within ideas, better inquiry and forward into different paths. These are the kind of expansive questions that teach us as students. They guide us to ask radically better questions - ones that drive impact, inspire change, improve learning and thinking.

We want to be on the teams where this level of work is done. A question is above all - an invitation. It says: I'm open and I would like to take the dance.

The context of Larry's goal was twofold: Firstly, it was his nineteen year career in the music business. His exquisite collection of insights and stories from those years. Secondly, it was the year of 2020 and what he had learned from his experience of living through the global pandemic. He had paid attention. He had listened to feedback from his teams at Decible Entertainment, Nice Life and the partner companies that form the ecosystem within which they operate, and he wanted to respond. He sought to make a constructive offering. That's how Larry operates.

Taking time to reframe and rethink is not easy work. The economist J.K. Galbraith once wrote, "Faced with a choice between changing one's mind and proving there is no need to do so, almost everyone gets busy with the proof." Whether it is a question of values, assumptions, bias or ways of operating - the process of holding up a mirror and adopting genuine mental flexibility takes time and can feel rather counterintuitive and uncomfortable. This is what made my work with Larry Wade both interesting and gritty. It is also what made the 2020 global pandemic the perfect backdrop to his reflection. Combining a methodology of video and written interviews, we explored the full gamut of Larry's point of view: his values, beliefs, mental models, leadership traits, limiting beliefs, career stories and personal anecdotes. We ran them through filters and lenses and the conscious result is this Manifesto. It is an audit of Larry Wade and the result is that Larry emerged from his experience with new visibility and clarity on how he approaches his leadership. In many ways, I changed too. As a lifelong learner, Larry helped me question and rethink some of my own stories that needed air and a look under the microscope.

My hope for you as the reader is that you get to experience the joy of knowing Larry and comparable value to that which I have gained through working with him: inspiration, insight - and good fun!

If we understand purpose as a living, breathing organism, through this work we can witness Larry's purpose as offering a spark for you to consciously consider your own Manifesto. Perhaps you are currently wrestling with a challenging problem or looking for a framework through which to carve your own insights and release those which no longer serve you. Whatever it is - Larry's work is here to place a path for you.

That's the beauty of leadership.

INTRODUCTION

As far back as I can remember, I have had an affinity for music. If it was listening to “Flash Light” by Parliament, “Don’t Lose My Number” by Phil Collins, “PYT” by Michael Jackson, “Smooth Operator” by Sade or “Sweet Love” by Anita Baker. Early in my childhood - before Spotify or Apple Music - as a kid I would listen to whatever my mother listened to. I have to believe that my mother was cool and listened to the best music.

I was born in Indianapolis, Indiana and my Mother and I lived all over the state as I grew up. As a single mother, she showed me that hard work pays off. We moved around quite a bit, because she was moving up the ranks in the insurance industry. In 1986, I was 10 years of age and we were living in Evansville, Indiana. This is where I met Philip Lawrence. We had no idea at the time, but we would go on to become friends and this is the person I would start my music business career with.

As I got older, I got more into rap music through listening to DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince, Run D.M.C, EPMD and N.W.A. My cousin would be the gateway for introduction to music from there. Although music would become my professional passion, I grew up loving sports - which included playing basketball and baseball. I should have focused on baseball, but I thought basketball was cooler. At the end of the day I was too short and lazy to excel at the sport and unfortunately it did not become my future. In high school I started working, and learned a lesson that I preach to my clients to this day. In Indiana, one of the staple industries for the state is corn. I was living in the suburbs of Indianapolis, and the summer job available in abundance was corn detasseling. Basically, the worst job ever. They find teenagers to work in the corn fields, in the summer, in the high heat, for very little pay. The idea of the job is to take the tassel out of the corn stalk before the corn grows. Halfway through the summer I wanted to quit so badly and my mother shut me down and said “The Wades’ don’t quit.” From there on I understood that if I agreed to do something I had to see it through to the end. I still live by that value - for personal and business. After high school, I was accepted into Purdue University, where I spent two years studying. I started as a mechanical engineering technology major, which I transferred out of quickly. I moved over to supervision - a program which geared you to be a line supervisor at a plant. For example: Ford Motors or GM. This is where I started to realize who I would become – someone who loves people and wants to know how they tick.

I departed Purdue without graduating, went back to Indianapolis and got a job selling mobile phones. Over the course of the years that followed I worked sales jobs - selling everything from high speed internet to IT services. I learned a lot about patience, communication, focus, teamwork, strategy and the full lifecycle of the sales process.

In 2002, Philip Lawrence moved to L.A... and I knew that it was my time to go. I said - I’ll come out and manage you! He agreed and the L.A. era began. I arrived in L.A. on August 20, 2002 and for those first three years the struggle was real. I didn’t come out with a ton of money and it felt like every person in L.A. had money but me. I tried to get a job initially, but didn’t secure anything and decided to grind it out. At the time, that probably was not the smartest decision, but I made it work. It’s hard to manage a brand new artist/songwriter with amazing talent, but no real relationships. Finally, I got Philip a job to sing background for Anthony Hamilton. Through that I met Eli Davis and he became my management mentor. Meeting Eli was life-changing for me. He would let me in on things and take me to meetings to be a fly on the wall. He would invest time in me and as our relationship evolved, I was able to ask him a lot of questions. I’ll never forget this: Philip and I were out with some friends, who got us on the list to attend Usher’s birthday party. This particular party was at Hollywood and Highland - he had tigers and all kinds of crazy stuff. I was dancing next to Eddie Murphy! But before we arrived, I was on the phone with Eli and asking him a slew of questions. I remember him saying “you know, people get paid for the information I’m giving you.” Eli was so generous with his knowledge and his time. He would say - you meet people to *meet* people.

By 2007, I had been in L.A. for five years - that's when my career started. I had been managing Philip and Bruno Mars (for a short period) and it was around that time that they departed for another manager. We had hit a wall in our business relationship and it was time for a change. Philip and I had been best friends since we were kids and our personal relationship suffered. It was then that I met Evan Bogart, who was in the process of exploring new management. Evan and I decided to work together after I helped set up some meetings for him while he was on a trip to Nashville. It was literally that simple. He needed that energy and I was proactive, willing and able to make those calls. This time signaled the beginning of a songwriter collective called The Writing Camp which included David "DQ" Quinones and Erika Nuri. It was the beginning of my experience in managing songwriters and producers who operate and seek to grow their own businesses. Shortly thereafter Evan co-wrote "Halo" for Beyonce - and then it was on. The song raced up the charts and I finally had a calling card to build his career! I managed Evan Bogart, who co-wrote the number five song in the country, and with one of the biggest artists in the world. I got out there, met with and talked with all the people. That's really what got all of this started - plus not being afraid to cold email people. I knew who the people were. I would go onto Wire Image every day, look at the events from the night before and match faces with names. I don't know if there was Hits Magazine back then, but that's how I did it. Piece by piece. I learned a ton about myself during that time. I had to make a name for myself and build a business. This was the time to make it happen or leave L.A. I needed to test my mettle and make it happen.

For the next few years, I focused on that roster. Evan decided to build a business with his brother and start Boardwalk Music Group. I continued to work with him to help build the music side. Simultaneously, I was building my roster at Decible Entertainment. Through my work in helping Evan build Boardwalk, I met Ricky Reed. It was clear that Ricky was a super talented guy, right from the start. He had a band called Wallpaper., and was just the coolest dude. We signed him to Evan's company for records and publishing. Evan did the deal with Sony ATV for publishing and I did the deal with Epic for records. In 2013 Ricky's longtime manager Steve Brodsky passed away from leukemia and I started managing Ricky shortly thereafter. We were officially working together in May 2013 and in the summer he produced "Talk Dirty" for Jason Derulo. By the end of 2014, Ricky had produced for Pitbull, another single for Derulo and also for Fifth Harmony. We secured his label deal with Atlantic Records. It was the right timing for us both - we were off to the races.

Sustainability is important to me. Over the years, I have worked to grow Decible Entertainment in a very conscious and sustainable way. I have learned how to manage a company, curate a roster and balance the team so that no one is spread too thin. I understand that I am best to focus on clients that I would do anything for, because I will always have energy for them. Any other type of client does not belong on the roster. If I look at Danja or Ricky, they are such special and magical people - I know I would fight for them. No matter what. I love being a part of their worlds. That's Decible culture. We are: spend the time, build, give the energy needed and hug the artist. It's hard to hug an artist when you have too many. It's okay to not manage everybody. I've learned that lesson too.

When we face challenges, it's vital to hold clear intentions. I ask a lot of questions: Am I making the right decision to bring in a client? Do I have my ego in check? Are they someone we simply cannot pass up? If these things are true, then we do it. Currently, I think we have the best executive team. They are like-minded individuals and also unique, on their own paths and with their particular opinions. I really love the dynamic. I feel the benefits of us as a diverse team.

It has always been my goal to foster a company culture that best supports the dance of art and commerce. As a leader, it brings me joy seeing smart people grow and thrive. Creating environments where good people can solve problems and be creative - this is a great passion of mine, and it has driven my curiosity.

I've spent nearly twenty years dedicated to the music business and thinking about how to meet talent with opportunity. The thesis of this manifesto is that great leadership in the music business is made possible by the people. If we understand, empathize, nurture and empower the people, then we are in the best position to make this unstable business - stable.

I enjoy discussing business and how to help our creative people do their best work. I am also a big advocate for the importance of mentoring and fostering environments where ongoing learning is supported. After the year that we experienced in 2020, I felt driven to take time to both question and document my approach to leadership. In these pages, I will discuss the tools, principles and practices that guide me as a leader. Organized into five chapters, my hope is that by offering a structure and examples from my own experiences - it will provide guidance and inspire you to document yours. Ultimately, I hope it's the start of a larger conversation.

CHAPTER 1

Tools

This chapter is designed to give you the tools to accomplish your goals. The tools are my basic building blocks for how I lead and handle business. These concepts are themes you can go back to, over and over, to strengthen your foundation as a leader in the music business.

In my experience, being able to rely on core values has fostered confidence and structure for how I lead. “The song” is a core tool that the business circles around. Artists, songwriters, producers, labels, publishers and executives exploit songs for success. The value of “the song” is paramount and if you are connected to hit songs, you can be very successful. Focus, strategy and teamwork are building blocks for every great leader. To have a long career in the music business, a combination of these components is necessary and the goal is mastery.

THE SONG

A great song allows me to know who the artist is. It tells me everything that I need to know about the artist. The song is what has helped me be successful - knowing the song and understanding what a great song is. I think this would be the case for any manager. The song is the currency for success. It is what enables us to generate all other revenue. If there’s a great song and you’re attached to it, regardless of whether it’s your artist, songwriter, or producer - that is how money happens. If your song does well, then momentum and opportunity will follow. It is the most vital building block. For me, being around successful songs has helped me build this business. There is no tour without a song. There is no marketing campaign without a song. There is no brand sponsorship deal without a song. It may feel indirect in some of those ways, but nothing else will flourish. The artist can be great. Lizzo was fantastic, but not a “hit artist” until she had a song that was the number one song - Truth Hurts - in the country. People loved her, but the song needed to happen and be deemed successful. Obviously, it was a great song before that. We knew we had something special, but she didn’t have success until the song was affirmed as a hit by the masses.

I build sustainability for our artists by releasing great products with great songs. The first project I was close to was Anthony Hamilton. The “Comin From Where I’m From” album showed me that great music gets you down the field. That has been proven to me over and over. If it’s Evan Bogart writing “Halo” for Beyonce or Ricky Reed producing Twenty One Pilots - great music will always find a way.

TEAMWORK

Being a part of finding Lizzo was one of the best moments of my life. It was built on teamwork and trust. The referral came from Ricky’s agent who also represented Lizzo. Matthew asked if I was in New York City at the same time she was - and invited me to see her open for Sleater Kinney. Ricky didn’t love the music, but I decided to attend since Matthew was so passionate about her. I went and couldn’t believe what I saw. She was a superstar in the making. I called Ricky the next day and convinced him to fly her to LA for a session. We signed her right after.

Success doesn’t happen around one person, it happens with teamwork. It’s all about the weakest link in the team, and making sure that weakest link is strong because you’re only as good as your weakest link. Teamwork is the tool for things to happen. In the example of Lizzo - if Matthew doesn’t send the email, it doesn’t work. If I’m not going to New York, it doesn’t work. If I don’t call Ricky and say, you need to really look at this, it doesn’t work. If he doesn’t then ask her, can you sing? It doesn’t work. It all clicks together because of the connectivity of the team.

Does Lizzo work if we're at Columbia records? I don't know if it works at Epic or at Universal. What we did learn was that Atlantic Records was the right team. They understood it. They hung in there with us. Julie Greenwald and Craig Kallman let me know that they really are the best in the business because of the decisions that they made. So we had to have all those pieces, that village, for Lizzo to work. I believe the music business at large understands that. I don't know if the world understands that this is what it truly takes - for a song to happen that they paired with an artist - that they also happen to like. That it takes hundreds and hundreds of people to get it to that point, for them to say, Oh, I like this! Then the fans have to say - Oh, I like the song! - once it's been promoted by the streaming services. To even be released by the label, it is a mission that takes hundreds of people. This business lives and dies by teamwork.

Julie Greenwald was very supportive to us early on in the relationship dynamic. When we decided to do the joint venture, she arranged for us to do our walkthrough and she said - I'm going to introduce you to your SWAT team! I use that example to this day, because it was very elemental. In any situation, you can have a SWAT team of people that are focused on a project and on getting the job done. Use that model. Figure out who the SWAT team is for your situation. It might be a problem we are looking to solve for a management client. I will sit down with one of my team members and we will figure out the SWAT team for that specific problem. This is how we get answers and execute results.

Bruno Mars is another example of great teamwork made manifest. Fourteen years ago, I connected The Stereotypes with Bruno Mars. In 2015 they worked together to make the hit songs for Mars' album 24k Magic. This led to Bruno's first wins for GRAMMY song and album of the year.

FOCUS

Working smarter allows you to keep your eyes on the prize. The music business is a marathon - you have to have patience and stay focused. Focus is the mindset that keeps you on the right path. Organization is the practice of that mindset. For example - keeping your files and information in order. Knowing the system that you operate. Focus is the actual mindset that you want to cultivate daily. This is imperative because it's easy to lose sight of the end goal - which happens frequently in business.

Focus is about knowing the humans that you're directing and how to keep them motivated and moving towards the team goal or the bigger picture objective. If it's a specific project and getting it done in a limited amount of time - then we are ensuring that timely communication of information is supporting the team. It's a people first approach with focus. An emotionally intelligent approach to focus - using empathy to help the team do their best work.

STRATEGY

Strategy is king. Being able to see steps ahead gives you advantage over the competition. Managing talent requires strategy because each step is part of the larger whole - think about phone calls with talent, for talent and to sign talent.

A fundamental partner to strategy is execution. An example of strategy is knowing when to pivot. In 2013 after releasing Ricky's band Wallpaper's debut album, we ended up pivoting into producing for other artists. Ricky was due to make another Wallpaper. album and this allowed us the ability to not need to go back to LA Reid to ask for more money. Ricky randomly in that year had produced the track for Jason Derulo's Talk Dirty. Strategically, I was able to see that. We put out an album that didn't go the way we wanted it to go - for various reasons. We'd

been blessed with an opportunity for him to make this track for Jason Derulo, which wasn't the hottest thing at that time, but Warner had done such a great job with starting to heat him up again. And "Talk Dirty" ended up becoming the second single. It was perfect timing as it allowed Ricky to take a break from his artist career and focus on something else creatively. He had a crazy year that year where his first manager passed away of leukemia in March and he released the album in July. By the end of 2013, the Derulo song was bubbling overseas. We got word that it was coming to the States in January of 2014, that's when I came to him and said - let's go produce for other artists for a while. Then we can go back when you're ready to make the second album. This would give him time to take a breather and not focus on his own artist career while still making music - which is what drives him and what keeps him alive. That worked out as we never got back to that second album, we found Lizzo.

In this example, we are looking steps ahead while also planting the seeds. Investing in situations while taking pressure off from others. That was a pivotal moment, but also a strategic moment in his career. Don't be afraid of the pivot with your client when you have already done the work in really knowing the intention for the larger vision.

Confident strategy requires you to be open. Keep your eyes and ears open because you don't know when the parts will click. Then when the synchronicity happens you know how to spot it and run towards it. In your own career, you have to be open to seeing the bigger picture, what the signs are telling you. Be open to what is being communicated to you.

CULTURE OF INCLUSION

Every person you encounter has their own story. As a leader, it is vital to draw upon people's unique experiences and allow them to inform you. No human can know everything or be perfect. This is why inclusion is so vital. Drawing on all team members is integral for our success. That means everyone is important - no matter if you are the assistant or CEO.

Inclusion is such a strong tool that we can draw upon. You don't have a strong team if everyone is the same. The differences in people make the team stronger because they have contrasting points of view. They come from different walks of life and have had varied experiences growing up. Each individual is going to give you information that you don't have because you didn't live their unique experience. I didn't grow up the same way as my assistant and I haven't had the same range of experiences as my team. That's why we make a great team - because we are able to learn and draw from each other. It helps make us stronger as a unit. Collectively, we have more experiences and more information as opposed to, not operating a culture of inclusion and having a group of people who mirror each other - which is ultimately playing from a point of disadvantage.

TIME

Time is a tool. Patience and time can be used together in a powerful way. Knowing the space of a few days can be powerful as a manager. Don't focus on instant gratification. Let things breathe. Know when your team needs you to slow things down. Time is such a malleable concept, but I have learned through experience that great work, over time, is an investment. Being successful in the management business is all about good timing. At Decible, for every client that I bring in and we onboard, there's a year of maturation in the relationship. This is a time where we focus on building trust, understanding workflow, how we work together, considering who the client is on a human level and how they tick. Then, in that time we figure out the right steps for their career and we hold patience for that. Sometimes the client will feel challenged by the process, but we know how to guide and support them through it. I know in the back of my mind that it's going to take a second because you just need that time. The relationship needs to evolve.

Time allows those seeds that we're planting to blossom. In the meantime, via daily communication and conversations with the client, they start to get a handle on how we think, how we do business and vice versa. We go through ups, downs and at that year mark is when things are really cooking. Because we have taken time to understand and know each other from both sides. Maybe we have done a few deals. We have definitely asked a lot of questions and worked our way through different moods.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Do the work and do it well. Pay attention to detail. Appreciate what the detail gives to you. If we know that a firm foundation is critical to the success of a project, we also know that we can't sustainably build those bigger moments until we get the small things right. When operating a business, attention to detail is a key tool in the kit. Particularly as a skill for new members of the team. From attention to detail comes confidence, which leads to greater opportunities. The best example of this is with the hiring of a new assistant. We work through attention to detail and I need to be confident that they can handle the little things: spelling, calendar bookings, pronunciation of a name. That the fundamentals of the job and our clients are well covered before any further growth or responsibility can happen. I apply attention to detail as a priority across the board - when I'm hiring, promoting, mentoring and teaching my team. We work in a relationship business. People will always appreciate your attention to detail.

CHAPTER 2

Communication

Communication is defined as a process by which information is exchanged between individuals. To me this is paramount when doing business. You must be a master at clear communication. This chapter discusses my process in how to effectively exchange information with people, teams and companies. I learned early on in my career when I was in sales - you have to communicate effectively - you have to understand your customers wants and needs. This is no different in the music business. Your customer could be a client, team member or label executive. It is imperative that we communicate effectively in all scenarios.

LISTEN

Listening is a virtue. People will tell you so much if you just listen to them. This helps in any storyline. For example, someone could be speaking about an issue that may be surface level. Active listening allows you to hear what they are saying to reveal the real issue - it helps you find more accurate solutions. To actively listen is an artform. Listening techniques can be mastered and as part of communication it's important to understand all the ways that we listen. There is no script. We come to work each day ready to solve a new set of problems for our clients. To do the right thing at the right moment - listening is key. Listening as much for what is not being said as to what is.

There are all kinds of different people in the world. Each person needs to be listened to in a way that helps them to be understood, relative to their style of communication. That's a general rule of thumb when managing a client, especially when there is an issue. We work on a triage of questions that help us get to the root of the problem. Is the client mad about something that happened at a session, because he or she is genuinely mad? Or is it because he or she has been in LA for six weeks and is exhausted and ready to go home? Can we get through these last few days? Or do we need to reschedule those last few meetings because they aren't essential and can be done next week as a phone call? Listen to the energy and not just the words.

COMMUNICATION IS THE LANGUAGE OF ALL BUSINESS

The way or willingness to communicate allows your business life to move. This is the ultimate "teamwork" motto. You have to communicate and arm your team and partners with whatever they need to do their jobs to the best of their ability. Communication is the transfer of information - it can be verbal, in an email or with your body language. When we align with our communication we get things done. When those involved in the communication all understand, comprehend and transfer additional information - we do business. Forward momentum happens. Success in business comes from the ability to clearly communicate your ideas and messages and have them actioned. Effective communication is the backbone to good business no matter whether you are giving the red light or the green light. Don't lower the bar and get distracted by your ego. Whether you are the head of A&R or an assistant, your ability to communicate is both an indicator of your character and your ability to do business. No one wants to be the bearer of bad news, but it is important to have the skill to deliver it well.

Don't lower the bar. Instead, be able to do the hard stuff well. If something isn't going to work, take the time to pair that message with the right method of delivery. Some news isn't meant for a text message. Look at the menu of options available to you and consciously decide - is the best medium a phone call, video call or taking a walk? Don't shy away from having tough conversations. This is an important skill and it's when you show your mettle as a communicator. Don't avoid confrontation. There are many people in the music business who only want to tell

you - I got you. I did this for you. No problem. We're all good. But then they can't deliver hard news, this is what causes communication breakdowns. Be able to say: this isn't going to work out. This is why. And we'll go from there. Know how to handle a challenging situation in a respectful way. Put the long term relationship ahead of the short term pain of a tough conversation.

By the end of 2014, we had the label deal with Atlantic Records. Ricky is signed as an artist to Epic. I remember how it all happened - LA Reid dialed me on the phone as he found out. He discovered through the grapevine that we were doing the deal with Atlantic. We were so close in the deal process at that point. On the phone he said: "Larry. Why are you doing a label deal with Atlantic? Will you at least give me my day in court? He's signed to my label. Meet me about this." I called Ricky and said "We've gotta go meet L.A." Ricky replied "Of course." So we went in and LA said "I'm going to give you the craziest deal that - if you deny me signing this deal, you're going to be officially crazy."

There was a big teaching moment in here for us. We needed to be smart and nurture both of these relationships that were very important. The day after our LA meeting, I called Ricky and said - How are you feeling? He said "I really like Atlantic. I really like what Craig means and represents. He's a blue collar "roll his sleeves up" type of guy and that fits us." I said: "You're right. How do you feel about LA?" Ricky said " I love LA. He gave me my shot. He saw that potential in me. I just don't know if that's the right place for my label. I don't know." I said: "Okay. So what we're going to do is - we're going to tell LA now that we don't want an offer from him. He'll be upset with us for a little while, but he'll get over it. What we don't want to do is take him down the rabbit hole of negotiating, witnessing what the deal is, and then saying no. Because we know we're saying no now. If we say no later, then he's really going to be mad. It's unfair to him when he's been so amazing to us and with your career. He's going to think that he's given the kitchen sink, the house, the back house, the pools and the Lamborghini - and then we still turned him down. He will think we are crazy not to take it. We agreed and I began those swift next steps to bring everyone clarity and resolve. I called LA and I said: Hey - you know we love you. You gave him a shot. You're the best, but we just are too far with Craig. He paused and said - well ... will he produce for me? I responded: yeah! of course he will produce for you. He said: "Okay, cool. I'll be cool. I'm not happy, but I'll be cool. Alright." And he got over it immediately. Why? Because we were very respectful of LA and we did business the right way where we didn't suck him into the vortex of it all. We didn't have him thinking he was going to get the deal, knowing what we knew. We respected him, his business and our relationship with him. We took the meeting, we heard him out and then we made a speedy decision and made it happen. I say this all the time - I'm in this business for the people. It's only about the people and that's what makes everything work. Having the right people around me, having the right people around Ricky, my clients, the Decible executives - the people in this business makes it all go.

Let's take another step and look at this story through a values lens. At Atlantic, it's Craig and Julie. They are two people we really align with, together with the values in how they run their business. Julie runs a very flat company, wants to be able to talk to everyone - and she does. So many of the staff have been there for a long time, and they share the same vision and values. The younger staff hold the same attitude as the older staff - which means it's embedded into the culture. In dialogue it sounds like: we work our asses off and we're making it happen. We're open and we're honest. We can be nimble when we need to be nimble. We choose our artists because we believe in them and we are here to take them all the way.

When we did our big tour of Atlantic, every person that we spoke with had the same mantra, and it's a big label - but they don't make it feel like a big label. They have 30 digital people, 14 publicists and four radio teams. It is a big label, but it doesn't feel that way when Ricky and I walk those halls. It feels like we know everyone and it feels like home. A great grounding place for the hard working Ricky Reed Nice Life and the 13 year old blue collar corn

detasseler from Evansville, Indiana. Healthy communication is built on the core value of respect. Everything needs to be done respectfully. Understand the timing of your delivery. Be direct, but draw on your empathy to approach it right. It's a dance when it comes to delivering messages, confidently, perhaps assertively - on time and on target. Knowing the dance will help you get the responses back that you need. When in doubt, over-communicate. Sometimes you've got to send that extra email to make sure that two parties are communicating. They should be communicating, but you know that they are probably not. So you check in and help avoid the wasted energy of fixing it later down the line.

An example of where communication fundamentally counts is terminating people at work. It's horrible, but it is not hard. The responsibility is on you to do it well. You tell them, you give them the best possible information and you help them understand the full picture of how this result came to be. You take the time to also highlight what they brought to the role that was good. You give them helpful advice on what they can choose to work on for the future - and you keep it short. If they aren't a good cultural fit for your company that's okay. Take good care of them as they transition into a place that will see them thrive.

INFORMATION FLOW

This is when you set up a system of highways connecting the people - then communication allows the information to happen. You meet people and Information flows when you are connected. I pride myself on being able to create a good flow of information at all parts of the business. Information flow is a granular idea because that is what it ultimately means to connect. Connectivity is about being able to bridge. At Decible, psychological safety is a big part of communication and information flow. We contribute to a culture of over-communicating and knowing that it's okay to ask questions. Continuous learning and development is valued and encouraged here. Whether it's through my work at Decible or Nice Life, I understand that sometimes people might over-think it and consider that their issue is a waste of time. I always encourage them to ask the question. Let me worry about whether it's a waste of my time or how we go about improving the process. Instead I would prefer we get those questions flowing. Holding back can lead to other issues. We didn't hire you to be perfect. Your point of view is essential in real time. You could be the secret sauce to open us up to a new way of seeing something. The point is that we are a team. Let's communicate as much as we can because that's when ideas come and when things manifest.

RELATABILITY

We are all human and bonds can be built by the smallest commonality. Relatability is SALES 101. You are selling yourself when connecting with people. The goal is to connect and motivate. Be open and find the thread. Make the choice - to take the time to connect. This is important. Vital. Particularly as we navigate this pandemic. One of my team members called me one day during the 2020 pandemic to talk a few things through. He said: You know, I'm having a really, really difficult time. It used to be very easy for me to connect with someone because I can say, hey, let's go get a drink and then talk. I can't do that anymore. I said: I hear that. I'm that same person. How about you call them up? Explain that you don't want anything and you are checking in to see how they are. That approach helped him break down some walls and also not to overthink the ones he was starting to build for himself. He reached out to a colleague of his and the guy told him - thank you for this. No one has simply checked in with me like this and I really appreciate you for doing that. Thank you.

We're all going through the same thing. It is difficult to stay connected, especially with business people where you are always calling and now there's so much communication and so many back to back zooms. Sometimes we all need someone to check in on us and say "hey, you good?" as opposed to - "Hey, did you get this done?" No one can

see you in the office to know that you're working - you're at home now with whatever your home situation is. No one really knows how this new world - this COVID world - really works. As our world begins to open back up, it's vital that we integrate the lessons learned from these past two years. When we look at relatability - this concept is fundamentally sales 101. It's how you network and build bonds. What commonality do you have with someone to get them to break down a wall, be able to make some type of connection so that you can start to understand who they are, how they tick and how you can best do business together? This breaks down to us understanding each other as people.

WALK THE HALLS

Give 'High Fives' to the people – see them in their natural habitats. Being physically present is the ultimate way to bond with people and brainstorm. The Lizzo project allowed me to put this into perspective. Atlantic is HQ'd in New York City and I am based in Los Angeles. To make my presence felt, the only way had to be in the NYC office in team Lizzo's natural habitat. I believe with the bonds you build, those team members will have a feeling of ownership in the relationship - which transfers to ownership in trying to break the artist. We can't walk the halls right now due to the pandemic. So I say - make the calls! Reach out and connect - human to human. That's the takeaway. Call people and ask them how they're doing. As leaders and community members, we have to walk the halls in new ways. What we cannot neglect is that human connection is of paramount importance. Send a bottle of tequila. Pick up the phone. Whatever version of the high five is what works for you. Do it. Human connection is vital for fostering a healthy community and therefore a healthy music business.

CHAPTER 3

Culture

In my business having a robust culture is a priority. This idea stems from my wanting to enjoy the job. Building the culture stems from the concepts defined in this chapter. People are the foundation of culture so choose them wisely. Having the right culture at my company is important because the sense of community that is built fosters buy in from my team members. This is led by the concepts of respect, diversity and professionalism.

PRESENCE

All roads lead to Larry Wade. Work hard to be able to navigate all rooms. As a manager, this goes beyond having clients nominated for Grammys, BET Awards, CMAs and Latin Grammys. It means having deep relationships in any room. Be a person of all worlds, so when the worlds collide you're familiar. Knowing how to make money in this business sustainably is directly related to holding a curiosity to meet and know all the people. I've been here in LA for 19-years, and I started going to Nashville 12-years ago because a client wanted to work in Nashville. If he's going down to write, then it's my responsibility to learn and understand that local writing community. This means being able to feel comfortable in the different worlds that my clients play in - and that breaks down to nurturing meaningful relationships in those worlds and being comfortable. It's important to stay curious and to check in regularly with people. The same can be said with the importance of connecting with and understanding the Latin community. I might not know everyone, but I know enough folks to get around and I'm always meeting new people. I'm prepared for my clients. I have deep relationships in many worlds. The ability to make meaningful introductions for your clients is important at all levels in this business. Particularly once they start winning awards and being in those rooms. Prepare for that journey by putting yourself out there and being open to all sorts of new people. See things from a more holistic perspective. Don't call yourself a Pop person and focus only there. It's a community and you don't know where the opportunities will come from. Be a Pop person who is comfortable in the worlds of Latin, Country and Hip Hop.

BRING THE PEOPLE TOGETHER

Companies and teams can sometimes be disjointed. You see this in large companies where one hand doesn't speak to the other. An example of this is when I came on board to manage Leikeli47 and her SWAT team were facing communication challenges. The product manager, the agent, the production company and the label A&R didn't openly communicate. Immediately I had everyone attend a dinner to open the line and figure out better ways to improve communication.

RESPECT THE GATEKEEPERS (MUTUAL RESPECT)

Respect is a virtue. In sales, it is paramount to build with the gatekeepers with whom you ultimately want to do business. That includes assistants, friends of an artist or the second in command. It's important that you treat them well in your quest to do business. No matter where you sit in the music business, this principle applies. Treat all gatekeepers with respect. Understand humility. It gets you further in life. There are many people in this business that are arrogant. I know that because I can be arrogant from time to time as well. I catch myself so that I don't allow it to carry on. I wasn't brought up that way. Arrogance is not an attractive quality and it can isolate others. It certainly doesn't foster healthy organizations. It doesn't matter who you work with or what level you are at, your humility will be a positive contribution and set a fine example for others: look people in the eye, take that extra

moment to say hello and enquire how someone is doing. Be interested. That goes from ground level to the CEO. If you are making this unstable business stable, then you need to have long relationships. And if you're going to be around for a long time, an assistant that you continuously ignored may be your boss someday. That's how it works. Treat people equally and show respect. It will be returned.

PROFESSIONALISM

The definition of professionalism is ultimately the embodiment of how you show up in the workplace. It is a sign of respect for yourself and others. Show up. Present yourself as a sign of respect for others, who choose to do the same.

MANY ARE CALLED AND FEW ARE CHOSEN

Great things are asked of great people. It comes down to how hard you invest to perfect your craft. Many people are talented, but it is possible to out work talent. I love this quote: "Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard." The return on investment of consistent work over time is invaluable. For example: Decible Entertainment's logo has the colors of blue and white because we are the "Blue Collar" management company in the business. We are not built on flash, just hard work. When asked about my team by a potential new client, I am able to communicate that they are intelligent, hardworking and well rounded human beings. They each hold specific talents that shine through when paired with the client and also in teams for bigger projects. When building a company culture, what you don't do is just as important as what you do. When looking at the Decible team, they work well together because they are approachable and relatable. They know how to be direct yet also very nurturing toward the roster.

PLANT SEEDS

Mentor people – executives and clients. Help guide and teach others with what you know. Build relationships with mentoring and share the knowledge that has been gifted to you. Mentorship builds kingdoms. Doug Morris mentored Lucian Grainge. Jimmy Iovine mentored Dr Dre, Andre Harrell mentored Sean "Puffy" Combs. The more you plant seeds the better the future generations of our industry.

DIVERSITY IS KEY

Diversity is health. Diversity allows us to learn from all walks of life. There is so much opportunity when we learn and lead with different points of view. The natural world is diverse and it is essential that business reflect this. I have a diverse business because I want to learn. Being able to learn from your team members, your employees and clients is vital. At the end of the day, if an idea comes up and we're all alike - then we don't learn or grow. Our ability to manifest a great result from the idea is limited because we all think in too similar ways. There's no magic. What I want and need in my company is a cross section of different backgrounds, different points of view and creative takes on a situation. Insight comes from a team who can understand the client in a multitude of ways and therefore attack issues from those unique places.

In this business we work with such a wide variety of people on a daily basis. This means we need to be sharpening our skills in relating. Paying attention to connectivity. It's only logical that we can do business with a broader range of people, if we can connect with them through our experiences. Have a diverse mix of people in your life. Engage with a diverse mix of situations - this will help you learn and grow.

IT IS A MARATHON

The race is long. You have to hang in there. Stay the course. In my experience, a substantial career is long and doesn't come easily. It's about getting through the wins and losses. Minimizing mistakes and focusing on solutions.

CHAPTER 4

Life

Arguably the most important chapter. We are all in the pursuit of work - life balance. Stop and smell the roses. The pandemic has made this chapter more crucial than ever. Through all my traveling and hectic work schedule I had lost balance. As an entrepreneur it is easy to put aside personal matters for professional ones. So it is paramount to stay true to yourself. The elements in this chapter give my thoughts to help put you on a path to a solid work/life balance.

HOLLYWOOD IS OUTSIDE

Look the part. Look your best. When you look your best, you feel it too. Other people will pick up on that energy. No matter whether you are an executive or an artist, take the time to dress for the room you are walking into.

WORK AND RELAX

Balance is an important part of life that I have learned. Ask the questions that help you to find your balance and live your vision for your life. In the music business, work can dominate your life and it's important to recharge regularly. When checking in with myself or needing to bring myself back into balance there are certain questions I ask:

Why am I doing this?

Am I tired?

Why am I frustrated?

I know to ask why and then follow the answer up with an action. It's probably because I'm not taking care of myself. Perhaps I'm thinking about work too much and I need to take time out. I didn't start taking real vacations until four years ago. I had it in my brain that the company would blow up without me, and then I learned that that wasn't the case and it was necessary that I take that time. I have learned to pace a few staycations, paired with a solid vacation, throughout the year to keep myself energized.

DRINK CLASE AZUL

A fine tequila must be enjoyed in various settings. When comedians are doing stand up, one of their tricks is to come back to a punchline over and over in a set. Clase Azul is that for me. If I'm buying a bottle for someone or enjoying a drink with someone, Clase is the consummate ice breaker.

PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS GOING TO BE PEOPLE

Don't be surprised by what people do - I learned this early in my career. Don't take anything personally. Most things that people do are not about you. Read *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz. This book was life changing for me. Four simple rules to live by that also speak to my statement here.

HAVE COMPASSION AND UNDERSTANDING

In 2020, the lesson of compassion and understanding was paramount. With diversity, compassion is more important than ever. Mental health is getting a bigger spotlight and I hope this comes with a better understanding of the small challenges that we all face. 2020 taught us that we all deal with change differently and have varied needs to get through those tough times. They are all valid and as leaders it's our job to meet the needs of everyone in our care. It's important to pay attention. We aren't out of the woods yet and we now have an opportunity to take what we learned in 2020 and apply it in 2021 and beyond.

SAY YES TO LIFE. IT'S A TWO-WAY STREET

Handle the things you can control to make sure you achieve your objective. The goal is to focus on the things you can control. For example, pay attention to the things you need to keep living life. Find a hobby. Find that one thing that brings balance to your color pallet of life.

LEARN

Say yes to education. Enrich your life through learning about the lives and experiences of others. Respect how lucky you are to enjoy your job. Even if you only enjoy it 50%, that's more than many other people get to experience in their lifetime. 2020 was a big learning experience for all of us. The global pandemic was horrible and continues to be so for many people, but we also learned what extraordinary things we are capable of and that we can come together to support each other. For my team, we took opportunities to learn and grow and that is always a worthy investment.

WHEN IN DOUBT - BE A GROWTH CATALYST

There can be times when you wonder where your focus and energy are best invested - when that happens - connect things. Connect people, ideas, opportunities, money and respect. Pay your good fortune forward. For example, be helpful to someone without anticipating anything in return. What you focus on expands and having that growth mindset and then sharing it with others will always yield dividends.

WHEN DO YOU FEEL ALIVE?

I ask this question of everyone I meet. Sometimes people are moving so fast they don't pay attention to the most important question of life. When do you feel alive? For me, it's when I am with people. When I am in celebration of teamwork. When my mother is in LA. Now she lives here!

CHAPTER 5

Leadership

There are many ways to lead a group of people. I don't believe that leadership starts with a title, but rather it starts with the person. Then it follows with a question: How do you show up as a leader? Do you lead from the front? What does leadership look like for you? This chapter starts to build the world my leadership style lives in. I believe that you must lead from the ground and not from the mountain top. From the ground you can see what's really meaningful to the group of people you are leading.

Lead by example. Breaking Lizzo was a very enlightening experience. We were trying to break a body positivity full-figured black woman that made pop music. We had to dig deep because the process wouldn't be easy - we had to make great music and bring the people together. That required a lot of travel to New York City to Atlantic's HQ - to build relationships from Craig and Julie down to all the assistants. This relationship building allowed me to push the label partner when we had to. Take over as manager of Lizzo if I had to. Fill in the holes with the DSP's if I had to. I had to do what it took to break the artist. Leading from the grass roots and up.

LEADERSHIP IS A PATH TO SUCCESS WHICH OTHERS CAN FOLLOW

To be a great leader you must cover a lot of ground. The goal is to connect, bond and activate as many people as possible. This allows many walks of life to value you as a resource. Once you are viewed in this way you become a magnet with power. (Use that for good!) Leadership is a path to success which others can follow. Being a leader combines all aspects of this book: Strategy, diversity, respect, focus, teamwork, communication, willingness to learn from others, motivating intelligence and leading from the front. These concepts below outline my tools and contribute to my personal leadership style.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

My style is relatable. Team-first. Accessible. I do not subscribe to leading from the mountain top. We are all human and must have a bond with everyone on the team.

Compassion

This is a general ideal for what we need in the world. A strong leader understands that teams have experiences and we must be motivated to help.

Focus

Leading a team or a team member to achieve their full potential. This is important to key leadership and it supports the strengths of the team. Allowing us to get the most from the team.

Respect

Lead with respect. It's the only grounding way to build a team. Respect is earned and not guaranteed.

Shared Vision

Building a shared vision for team buy-in. This includes a shared agreement of comradery, culture and future plans.

Challenge the System

Challenge the team to find better ways to do business. Allow the team to explore and inform. Learn from your team.

Empower

Equip the team with the ability to achieve greater heights in their respective careers. Empowering the team gives them the sense of ownership in the company.

Motivate and Congratulate

Recognize the value of the team and their achievements. Praise publicly. Give constructive criticism privately.

Lead by Example

I've learned that when you work hard your team will follow. Leading with good habits helps to also install good habits.

Quality Relationships

These take time and will take you far. Grow and nurture your relationships.

ACTIONS FOR IMPACT

If you feel inspired to pick up this conversation, here are my top 5 contemplation questions:

What does respect mean to you?

When you reflect on your leadership style, do you lead from the front?

What does life balance look like for you?

How will you connect with your people?

What are the 5 anchor principles that guide your business?