



## Introduction

A number of years ago, I began using the term “no compromise” in my lectures, consulting work and writing. I used it to communicate, without question or misinterpretation, a leadership style that is resolute in its commitment to consistency, accountability and integrity. It seemed the more I used “no compromise,” the more it seemed to strike a deep and resonating chord in business leaders. I heard stories about leadership team and staff meetings targeting key issues with “no compromise” as the non-negotiable outcome. Business owners and managers would tell me how no-compromise thinking helped them decisively deal with difficult situations, problem employees or tasks they previously avoided. Today, barely a day passes without receiving a no-compromise story or reference to how it impacted a leader’s personal thinking and business.

Joined together, these two simple words immediately establish a higher standard of leadership thinking and behavior. Think of no compromise as a powerful internal compass that keeps you and your company steadfastly on course. In his latest book, *The Success Principles: How To Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*, Jack Canfield talks about a concept he calls, “99 percent is a bitch, 100 percent is a breeze.” In an interview with *Strategies*, Canfield explained, “I brush my teeth every day; I have a 100 percent commitment to dental health. I don’t have to think about it. It’s a done deal. ... If I commit 99 percent, almost every day I have to re-decide. If you commit to answering your phone calls within 24 hours, don’t go to

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## NO-COMPROMISE LEADERSHIP: A Higher Standard of Leadership Thinking and Behavior

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bed without doing it.” 100 percent commitment, that’s the essence of no-compromise leadership.

No-compromise leadership is all about the thinking, behavior and accountability that support all leadership results and business outcomes. By design, no compromise cuts through the myriad excuses, emotional blockages and procrastination that silently infect leadership performance. If “no compromise” becomes the mandate — the guiding principle upon which all other leadership behavior emanates — the resulting business outcomes will be nothing short of breakthrough.

If no compromise is all about the thinking, behavior and accountability of business leaders, the gap between “what’s being done” and “what needs to be done” can be alarmingly wide and deep. Take a walk through your company and grade everything you see and experience it as either compromise or no compromise. How does your company measure up in the following?

- ✦ Customer greetings and customer service
- ✦ Customers with a demeanor and body language reflective of the service experience your company promises to give
- ✦ How managers and leaders communicate with employees
- ✦ Work environment, attitude and team spirit of staff
- ✦ Cleanliness and organization of workspaces
- ✦ Quality and delivery of the service or product
- ✦ Extra touches that make doing business with your company a delight
- ✦ Balance sheet, profit and loss statement and statement of cash flow
- ✦ Accounts payable and receivable reports

### **How much compromise or no compromise do you see?**

With no compromise as the mandate, even the best and most respected companies reveal the need for improvement. Business size truly doesn’t matter. The more compromise that seeps in, the more drag it places on growth, momentum and energy of the company. Allow it to go unchecked, even for a nanosecond, and the most achievable goals instantly turn into



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pipe dreams... yet another collection of missed opportunities. *No compromise means no missed opportunities.*

To understand the concept of no compromise, you must first understand what compromise is. In its simplest terms, compromise is the acceptance of a situation or outcome that varies from what was originally intended. Call it settling for something less, lowering expectations or making unnecessary concessions — there is no place for compromise in business. True, goals and objectives may need to be revised as business and market realities change, but lowering expectations or settling for less, with the knowledge that compromise was embedded in the decision, is unacceptable. Reality certainly cannot be ignored. However, allowing compromise to knowingly become part of your reality represents the intentional degrading of the integrity of the company. And the more compromise takes hold, the more energy it takes to flush it out.

**But the definition of compromise also has a darker meaning.** It also means a breach in security, structural integrity or a failure to obey, keep, or preserve something — like a law, a trust or a promise. If the darker side of compromise infects the culture and behavior of an entire company, its sheer weight can force it to implode, taking with it the trust of its customers, stockholders — not to mention the pensions and retirement dreams of its employees.

Just as no compromise is a mode of thinking and a discipline, so is compromise. Both are choices and both require discipline. Compromise offers the path of least resistance. It's easier to avoid a leadership responsibility than to do it. It's easier to avoid financial accountability than to do it. It's easier to avoid addressing a difficult employee's behavior issues than to do it. It's easier to deliver mediocre customer service than world-class service. Even in our personal lives, it's easier to be a couch potato than adhere to an exercise routine. It's all a choice in our personal thinking and behavior.

Is there a good side to compromise? Of course there is. The basic tenet of negotiation is to reach a compromise that is satisfactory to all parties. You're not compromising in a negative way when you "negotiate" a work schedule that helps an employee manage family responsibilities while still



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fulfilling his or her duties. You're not compromising if you deviate from your financial budget to take advantage of a great opportunity that will add value or cost savings to the company.

That being said, there is compromise that is good, compromise that is bad — and then there is no-compromise leadership. No-compromise leadership is a commitment to a higher standard that guides and nurtures a business culture capable of extraordinary achievement. No compromise defines the type of leader you are. It defines the DNA of the business

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you lead and whose success you are charged to achieve.

I have been an entrepreneur almost my entire working career. I've devoted myself to teaching, consulting and writing about busi-

ness and the kind of issues that keep leaders up at night. You know, the tough stuff like growth challenges, cash-flow nightmares, lethargic productivity, partnership conflicts, employee turnover, behavioral and toxic business culture issues. I've met countless business owners and leaders who unknowingly *strive to struggle* because of the compromise they create and spread in the very companies they want to grow. I've listened intently to employees tell their side of the story, and I must say, this is often the most enlightening source for identifying where and how much compromise has infected a business. (Yes, there are two sides to every story.) I've met burnt-out leaders who just want to quit. Through it all, I have seen firsthand the anguish, financial devastation and the remnants of great dreams that were all contaminated by compromise. In every case, the compromise emanated from the leader's own behavior and failure to be "accountable." In striking contrast, I've certainly had the honor of meeting many forward-thinking individuals who lead dynamic companies, divisions or departments. Without exception, all have no-compromise leadership embedded in their thinking, behavior and culture.

Countless books have been written on leadership, accountability, systems, and self-improvement. With the multitude of "How to master this"



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or “The ten secrets to ...” books and courses available, there is no shortage of guidance. But when your operating system — your behavior — your company’s DNA — is missing key components, no amount of learning, new ideas or motivation is going to create lasting change in your behavior as a leader. Try as you might, your compromising thinking and behavior — your internal operating system — will pull you and your company back to its old behavior. Until you shift to and embrace no-compromise leadership, compromise will continue.

The decision to write this book was a simple one, because I have seen the damage that compromise can inflict not just on a business, but on its leaders, employees, families, vendors and all those who depend on it. And like it or not, believe it or not, compromise is choice. And because it is a choice, any individual can also choose to be a no-compromise leader. Becoming a no-compromise leader is a commitment to take a higher road that is sadly less traveled. It requires tenacity and a deep understanding of yourself. This is not about the pursuit of an elusive state of perfection, but rather the pursuit of consistency, accountability and predictability. It’s a voyage of continuous improvement that will never end; you’ll just move closer to being a no-compromise leader — because even the best have room for improvement.

Business is more than an exciting game. Leadership is more than getting things done through others. I have always viewed a business as a living entity to which entrepreneurs and leaders give life. I have the utmost respect for that life, even though its vital signs are read on balance sheets and income statements. In the end, when you guide a business through its many stages of life, it can give so much back to all who were responsible for making it strong and vibrant. This goes so far beyond financial rewards. It’s not about the money — the money is only one of many measurements of success. Who could ever put a monetary value on fulfillment, sense of accomplishment, pride, respect, loyalty, gratitude and achieving your full potential?

I know firsthand what no-compromise leadership can do to bring vitality to a business. My company, Strategies, is a no-compromise company.



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No, we're not huge and we don't have thousands of employees. We simply run a small, dynamic and highly efficient company that adheres to a no-compromise mandate. We make money and we have fun. As the founder and CEO, I have the freedom to do the work I enjoy, because my team is empowered to make decisions. We measure our performance and efficiency through our balance sheet, income statements and cash flow. Most of all, we built a company based on relationships with our customers — and no compromise is the hallmark of successful relationship building.

So, am I a no-compromise leader? The only way to answer that question is that I'm much closer today than I've ever been. I know where I need to improve and I'm sure I'll discover other things, as well, as I move forward. As I wrote earlier, it's a commitment to continuous improvement — and I'm 100 percent committed.

This book had to be written to give every business leader, manager and entrepreneur a no-compromise operating system that will allow dynamic companies to emerge. A business is a life form and it must be cared for and respected in order for it to grow, prosper and endure. That is the true role of the no-compromise leader.

### **Three steps to no-compromise leadership: The thinking, the application and the shift**

Part I of this book is all about understanding, preparing and the thinking of no-compromise leadership. Throughout the years of teaching, consulting and referencing no-compromise leadership, it's amazing how many in leadership roles at all levels almost instantly embrace the concept. It's like hearing a collective, "There is no option, I'm going to be a no-compromise leader from this moment forward." And just as quickly as they throw that switch to the NCL position, they are vulnerable to flipping back into their compromise-as-usual mode faster than an overloaded circuit breaker. Time and time again I've seen leaders make wonderful progress, only to have their old compromising behaviors rise to the surface and take over. This is why Part One of this book is so critical to understand and digest before we can move forward into the disciplines.



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In Part II, I'll take you through a series of business disciplines I call *The Four Business Outcomes*. These four outcomes will create the optimum balance your business will require to achieve quantum leap growth. *No-compromise leadership is all about driving and creating balance across The Four Business Outcomes.*

In Part III, I'll give you strategies to make your shift to no compromise not only stick, but endure. For now, you need to be centered on what it truly takes to become a no-compromise leader.