PART FIVE

Developing Yourself as a person, as an executive, as a leader

by Peter Drucker

from Managing the Non-Profit Organization

Who is Peter Drucker?

A social ecologist, writer, consultant, and retired professor.
Author of 41 books, have been translated into 37 languages.
Regular columnist in the Wall Street Journal for 20 years.
Awardee of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the U.S.’s highest civilian honor; and orders from the governments of France and Austria.
Holds 25 honorary doctorates from American, Belgian, Czech, English, Spanish, and Swiss universities.
Served as the president of the Society for the History of Technology from 1955 to 1960.
You Are Responsible

The first priority for the non-profit executive’s own development is to **strive for excellence**.

That brings satisfaction and self-respect.

Workmanship counts, not just because it makes such a difference in the quality of the job done but because it makes such a difference in the person doing the job.

Without craftsmanship, there is neither a good job, nor self-respect, nor personal growth.

Many years ago I asked the best dentist I ever had, “What do you want to be remembered for?”

And he answered, “When they have you on the autopsy slab, I want them to say that fellow really had a first-rate dentist!”

How different that attitude is from the person who does the job to get by, who hopes that nobody will notice.

Self-development is **very deeply meshed in** with the mission of the organization, with commitment and belief that the work done in this church or this school matters.

You cannot allow the lack of resources, of money, of people, and of time (always the scarcest) to overwhelm you and become the excuse for
Developing Yourself

Then you begin to blame the world—“they” won’t let me do a good job.

And that’s the first step down a steep, slippery slope.

Paying serious attention to self-development—your own and that of everyone in the organization—is not a luxury for non-profit executives.

Most people don’t continue to work for a non-profit organization if they don’t share, at least in part, the vision of the organization.

Volunteers, particularly, who don’t get a great deal out of working for the organization aren’t going to be around very long.

They don’t get a check, so they have to get even more out of the organization’s work.

In fact, you don’t want people who stay on with the organization just because that’s what they’ve always done but who don’t believe in it anymore.

And in a well-run, results-oriented organization, you should be making such demands on people for time and work that it’s unlikely too many with that jaded outlook would stay on.

You want constructive discontent.

That may mean that many of the best of the paid staff or volunteers come home exhausted after a big meeting, complaining loudly about how stupid everybody is and how they don’t do things that are obvious, and then respond, “But it’s so important!” if someone asks why they stay on.

The key to building an organization with such a spirit is organizing the work so everyone feels essential to a goal they believe in.

One of the church people I work with has a clear goal that in this church of twelve thousand members, there are no parishioners.

There are only paid and unpaid ministers—everyone is put to work at that level.

That’s a goal; not yet an accomplishment.

Nevertheless, working toward that goal, from fifty to a hundred people a year are added to the force taking on church responsibilities.

By now the church has almost no paid staff.

Instead of the usual paid, ordained, youth minister, this church has six unpaid and unordained individuals who, together, do the one full-time job.

And each of these volunteers sits down twice a year and writes a letter to himself or herself (a copy to the pastor) answering the questions: “What have I learned?

What difference to my own life has my work with kids at the church been making?”

The pastor has no difficulty attracting volunteers.

In fact, his problem is a waiting list.
To Make a Difference

From the chief executive of a non-profit on down through the ranks of paid staff and volunteers, the person with the most responsibility for an individual’s development is the person himself—not the boss.

Everyone involved must be encouraged to ask themselves: What should I focus on so that, if it’s done really well, it will make a difference both to the organization and to me?

A hospital floor nurse, for example, under terrific pressure of time and money, with doctors demanding more and the paperwork out of control, looks at the thirty-two orthopedic patients and says, “They are my job. All the rest, basically, are impediments. What can I do to concentrate on that job? Maybe it is something procedural. Can we change the way we deliver our services to enable me to be a better nurse?”

You can only make yourself effective—not anyone else.

Your first responsibility to the non-profit organization for which you work is to make sure you get the most out of yourself—for yourself. You can work only with what you have.

Creating a record of performance is the only thing that will encourage people to trust you and support you. Complaining about stupid bosses, a stupid board, and subordinates who sabotage you, won’t create that record. It’s your job and your responsibility to talk to those on whom you depend, and who depend on you, to find out in a systematic way what helps, what hinders, and what needs to be changed.

All the people I’ve known who have grown review once or twice a year what they have actually done, which part of that work makes sense, and what they should concentrate on.

I’ve been in consulting for almost fifty years now and I’ve learned to sit down with myself for two weeks in August and review my work over the past year.

First, where have I made an impact? Where do my clients need me—not just want me but need me? Then, where have I been wasting their time and mine? Where should I concentrate next year so as not only to give my best but also to get the most out of it? I’m not saying that I always follow my own plan. Very often something comes in over the transom and I forget all my good intentions. But so far as I have become a better and more effective consultant and have gotten more and more personally out of consulting, it’s been because of this practice of focusing on where I can really make a
Developing Yourself

Only by focusing effort in a thoughtful and organized way can a non-profit executive move to the big step in self-development: how to move beyond simply aligning his or her vision with that of the organization to making that personal vision productive.

Executives who make a really special contribution enable the organization to see itself as having a bigger mission than the one it has inherited.

To expand both the organization and the people within it in this way, the top executive must ask the key questions of himself—the questions I ask myself each August.

Indeed, each member of the staff must do it, and each volunteer.

And the senior people must sit down regularly with each other and consider the questions together.

The form for this kind of exchange can be quite flexible.

In fact, one of the best examples I’ve ever heard of was improvised by Bruno Walter, the great conductor, much loved by the musicians he led.

At the end of each season, Walter wrote a letter to each member of the orchestra something like this: “My dear [First Trumpet], you taught me quite a bit when we rehearsed the Haydn symphony by the way you handled that difficult passage.

But what have you learned this season as a result of our working together?”

Probably half the musicians simply sent back a perfunctory postcard.

But the other half sat down and wrote serious letters: “I now suddenly understand what I, as a twentieth-century trumpeter, have to do to sound like an eighteenth-century trumpeter in the Haydn symphony.”

Playing in Bruno Walter’s orchestra became a constant developmental challenge for his musicians.

The critical factor for achieving this kind of success is accountability—holding yourself accountable. Everything else flows from that.

When you are president or vice-president of the university or the bank, the important thing is not that you have rank, but that you have responsibility.

To be accountable, you must take the job seriously enough to recognize: I’ve got to grow up to the job.

Sometimes that means acquiring skills.

Even harder, you may find that the skills you worked so hard to acquire over the years no longer apply: you spent ten years learning all about computers, but now you have to learn to work with people.

By putting accountability first, you build the commitment to mobilize your own resources.

You ask: What do I have to learn and what do I have to do to make a difference?
A wise person I worked with many years ago said to me, “For good performance, we give a raise. But we promote only those people who leave behind a bigger job than the one they initially took on.”

Self-development seems to me to mean both acquiring more capacity and also more weight as a person altogether.

By focusing on accountability, people take a bigger view of themselves. That’s not vanity, not pride, but it is self-respect and self-confidence. It’s something that, once gained, can’t be taken away from a person.

It’s outside of me but also inside of me.

**Setting an Example**

In all human affairs there is a constant relationship between the performance and achievement of the leaders, the record setters, and the rest.

In human affairs, we stand on the shoulders of our predecessors.

The leader sets the vision, the standard.

But he or she is not the only one.

If one member of an organization does a markedly better job, others challenge themselves.

Leadership is not characterized by stars on your shoulder; an executive leads by example.

And the greatest example is precisely the dedication to the mission of the organization as a means of making yourself bigger—respecting yourself more.

**What Do You Want to Be Remembered For?**

To develop yourself, you have to be doing the right work in the right kind of organization.

The basic question is: “Where do I belong as a person?”

This requires understanding what kind of work environment you need to do your best.

When young people come out of school, they know very little about themselves.

They do not know whether they work best in a big organization or a small one.

They rarely know whether they like working with people or working alone, whether they prosper in a situation of uncertainty or not, whether they need the pressure of deadlines to perform efficiently, whether they make decisions quickly or need to sleep on them.

The first job is a lottery.
The chances of being in the right place are not very good. It takes a few years to find out where you belong and to begin self-placement. ¶¶

We all tend to take temperament and personality for granted. But it’s very important to take them seriously and to understand them clearly because they’re not too subject to change by training.

People who have to understand a decision completely before they can act don’t belong on a battlefield: when the right flank suddenly caves in, an officer may have eight seconds to decide whether to fight or retreat.

The kind of person who likes to reflect on decisions might force himself to decide—but is very likely to make the wrong decisions. ¶¶

If the thoughtful answer to the question “Where do I belong?” is that you don’t belong where you currently work, the next question is why?

Is it because you can’t accept the values of the organization? Is the organization corrupt?

That will certainly damage you, because you become cynical and contemptuous of yourself if you find yourself in a situation where the values are incompatible with your own.

Or you might find yourself working for a boss who corrupts because he’s a politician or because she’s concerned only with her career.

Or—most tricky of all—a boss whom you admire fails in the crucial duty of a boss: to support, foster, and promote capable subordinates. ¶¶

The right decision is to quit if you are in the wrong place, if it is basically corrupt, or if your performance is not being recognized.

Promotion itself is not the important thing. What is important is to be eligible, to be equally considered.

If you are not in such a situation, you will all too soon begin to accept a second-rate opinion of yourself.

“Reportting” Yourself

Sometimes a change—a big change or a small change—is essential in order to stimulate yourself again.

Recognizing this need will grow in importance as people live for many more years than they used to and are active so much longer.

A great many volunteers, for instance, move on to another organization after ten or twelve years of working for one non-profit.

The usual need they feel is to change the routine.

An unexpressed need may be that they no longer are learning.

Be aware of that touchstone yourself, because when you stop learning in a job, you begin to shrink. ¶¶

The switch doesn’t have to be to something far afield.

Richard Schubert, for instance, for many years president of the American Red Cross, came up as a labor lawyer and human resources
manager in private industry.

In his forties, he switched to government and then back to private industry—and then to the Red Cross.

He is so effective precisely because he has worked with a wide variety of different people in quite different work cultures.

When you begin to fall into a pleasant routine, it is time to force yourself to do something different.

“Burnout,” much of the time, is a cop-out for being bored.

Nothing creates more fatigue than having to force yourself to go to work in the morning when you don’t give a damn.

Perhaps, all that is needed is a small shift—the school principal who accepts a few invitations to visit other school districts and talk over problems with other principals and teachers.

The other possibility is to take on a volunteer job with another organization.

That might seem impossible to non-profit executives who are already working sixty to seventy hours a week; but three hours a week spent in an entirely different activity might do the trick.

Precisely because you are overworked, you need the extra—and different—stimulus to put different parts of yourself to work, both physically and mentally.

The Girl Scouts now have many more volunteers than they ever had in their history because they discovered that busy women working as lawyers and accountants and bank officers also need the challenge of working hard in an entirely different environment.

Most work is doing the same thing again and again.

The excitement is not the job—it is the result.

Nose to the grindstone, eyes on the hills.

If you allow a job to bore you, you have stopped working for results.

Your eyes, as well as your nose, are then on the grindstone.

To build learning into your work, and keep it there, build in organized feedback from results to expectations.

Identify the key activities in your work—perhaps even in your life.

When you engage in such activities, write down what you expect to happen.

Nine months or a year later, compare your expectations to what actually happened.

From that you will learn what you do well, what skills and knowledge you need to acquire, what bad habits you have (which might be the most important discovery).

Or you may find out, as I did, that you stopped too soon in your push for results.

I soon realized that I’m terribly impatient.
You may also realize that, again and again, your best intentions do not produce results because you don’t listen—the most common bad habit. You’re certainly not limited to learning only from your own activities. Look at the people in your own organization, your own environment, your own set of acquaintances. What do they do really well—and how do they do it? In other words, look for successes. What does Joe do that seems so hard for the rest of us to do? Then try to do it yourself.

It’s up to you to manage your job and your career. To understand where you best belong. To make high demands on yourself by way of contribution to the work of the organization itself. To practice what I call preventive hygiene so as not to allow yourself to become bored. To build in challenges.

Doing the Right Things Well

Most of us who work in organizations work at a surprisingly low yield of effectiveness. I’ve been working with executives for close to fifty years and most of them work hard and know a great deal. But fully effective ones are rare. The difference between the performers and nonperformers is not a matter of talent. Effectiveness is more a matter of habits of behavior, and of a few elementary rules. But the human race is not too good at it yet because organizations are pretty recent inventions. The rules for effectiveness are different in an organization from what they were in the one-man craft shop. In solo work, the job organizes the performer; in an organization, the performer organizes the job. The first step toward effectiveness is to decide what are the right things to do. Efficiency, which is doing things right, is irrelevant until you work on the right things. Decide your priorities, where to concentrate. Work with your own strengths. The road to effectiveness is not to mimic the behavior of the successful boss you so admire, or to follow the program of a book (even mine). You can only be effective by working with your own set of strengths, a set...
of strengths that are as distinctive as your fingerprints.

Your job is to make effective what you have—not what you don’t have. ¶¶

You identify strengths by performance.

There is some correlation between what you and I like to do and what we do well.

There is a strong correlation between what we hate to do and what we do poorly simply because we try to get it out of the way as fast as possible, with minimum effort and postpone, postpone, postpone working on it at all.

Albert Einstein said he would have given everything, including the Nobel Prize, for the ability to play the fiddle well enough to play in a symphony orchestra.

But he simply didn’t have the coordination between his two arms and hands that are the prerequisite for being a master string instrument player.

He loved playing—he practiced four hours a day and enjoyed it.

But it wasn’t his strength.

He always said he hated doing math.

He was only a genius at math. ¶¶

Strengths are not skills, they are capacities.

The question is not, can you read, but are you a reader or a listener, for instance?

This particular characteristic is almost as strongly determined as handedness.

Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman were listeners.

Roosevelt rarely read anything; he had it read to him.

Eisenhower was a reader but didn’t know it.

When he was Commander-in-Chief in Europe his press conferences were widely admired.

His aide insisted that journalists hand in their questions—written-up to a few minutes before the conference.

Ike read them and his responses were superb.

Then he became president, following Roosevelt and Truman, who had set the style of taking questions from the press from the floor (as listeners, they were good at it).

Ike, however, performed poorly; the press disliked him because they said he never answered the question.

His eyes glazed over.

He didn’t even really hear the questions. ¶¶

People have become more understanding in recent years of how strengths vary from person to person—that there are morning people, or perceptive people, or conceptual people.
What many people do not know about their strengths and weaknesses, however, is whether they are comfortable with other people or have to learn how to work with them.

Too many think they are wonderful with people because they talk well. They don’t realize that being wonderful with people means listening well.

**Self-Renewal**

Expect the job to provide stimulus

*only if* you work on your own self-renewal,

*only if* you create the excitement, the challenge, the transformation that makes an old job enriching over and over again.

*Seeing both* yourself and the task in a new dimension can sometimes expand this capacity.

There is an old story about the great clarinetist in an orchestra who was asked by the conductor to sit in the audience and listen to the orchestra play.

For the first time, he heard music.

He wasn’t simply playing the clarinet expertly, he was making music.

That’s self-renewal.

Not doing anything differently but giving it new meaning.

The most effective road to self-renewal is to look for the unexpected success and run with it.

Most people brush the evidence of success aside because they are so problem-focused.

The reports executives usually work with are also problem-focused—with a front page that summarizes all the areas in which the organization underperformed during the past period.

Non-profit executives should make the first page show the areas where the organization over-performed against plan or budget, because that is where the first signs of unexpected success begin to appear.

The first few times you will brush it aside: Leave me alone, I’m busy solving problems.

Eventually, though, a suspicion may begin to surface that some of the problems would work themselves out if we paid more attention to the things that were working exceptionally well.

I know a very able woman who runs a small community service agency.

She began to notice that her Visiting Nurses were putting in steadily increasing claims for overtime.

First, like all of us, she tried to control the increase.

She met with the nurses, asked them why their overtime bills were climbing, and discovered that they were treating more people after 6:00 P.M., when they came home from work.

As a result of improved medical care, the caseload was shifting from
invalids and shut-ins to people who functioned but who needed help with
services such as insulin therapy, physical rehabilitation, injections.

Now she is in a new field.

She is a missionary to meet this new need—and she has become a newly
gorious and effective person.

The three most common forcing tools for sustaining the process of self-
renewal are teaching, going outside the organization, and serving down
in the ranks.

When an individual is asked to explain to a group of colleagues how she
did something that worked very well, she learns, and so do the listeners.

Spending time doing volunteer work in another organization also opens
up alternatives.

And one of the oldest techniques for keeping executives alive to the
realities of implementing an organization’s mission is for them to work
once or twice a year at the level where service is delivered to the
organization’s clients.

One well-trained medical bureaucrat I know was forced by a strike or
some sudden epidemic years ago to work as a floor nurse for a week.

Suddenly he was down where the heartbreaks and the successes were
played out.

It forced him to learn and, as he admitted to me, “It forced me to be
honest with myself.”

Now the hospital’s rule (and it is one of the finest hospitals I know) is that
he and all his administrators spend one week a year working on the floor
with the people who take care of the patients.

All the individuals who have the greatest ability for self-renewal focus
their efforts.

In a way, they are self-centered, and see the whole world as nourishment
for their growth.

What Do You Want to Be Remembered For?

When I was thirteen, I had an inspiring teacher of religion, who one day
got right through the class of boys asking each one, “What do you want
to be remembered for?”

None of us, of course, could give an answer.

So, he chuckled and said, “I didn’t expect you to be able to answer it.

But if you still can’t answer it by the time you’re fifty, you will have wasted
your life.”

We eventually had a sixtieth reunion of that high school class.

Most of us were still alive, but we hadn’t seen each other since we
graduated, and so the talk at first was a little stilted.

Then one of the fellows asked, “Do you remember Father Pfliegler and that question?”
We all remembered it.

And each one said it had made all the difference to him, although they didn’t really understand that until they we in their forties.

At twenty-five, some of us began trying to answer it and, by and large, answered it foolishly.

Joseph Schumpeter, one of the greatest economists of this century, claimed at twenty-five that he wanted to be remembered as the best horseman in Europe, the greatest lover in Europe, and as a great economist.

By age sixty, just before he died, he was asked the question again.

He no longer talked of horsemanship and he no longer talked of women.

He said he wanted to be remembered as the man who had given an early warning of the dangers of inflation.

That is what he is remembered for—and it’s worthwhile being remembered for.

Asking that question changed him, even though the answer he gave at twenty-five was singularly stupid, even for a young man of twenty-five.

I’m always asking that question: What do you want to be remembered for?

It is a question that induces you to renew yourself, because it pushes you to see yourself as a different person—the person you can become.

If you are fortunate, someone with the moral authority of a Father Pfliegler will ask you that question early enough in your life so that you will continue to ask it as you go through life.

Non-Profits: The Second Career

Interview with Robert Buford *

PETER DRUCKER: Tell me, Bob, when you decided to add a major non-profit institution, Leadership Network, to your activities and to be the chief executive of it in addition to running your own business, you were in your mid-forties.

What did you have to learn to make that transition?

ROBERT BUFORD: The critical thing for me to learn was how to reallocate my own sense of identity from how well I do in business—basically a life of accumulation—to one of service, where service is the primary driving force in life.

PETER DRUCKER: Is that a change in values or a change in behavior or both?

ROBERT BUFORD: I hold the same values I’ve had all along.

But I had to make a major change in proportions and behavior.

PETER DRUCKER: I take it, while you have been very successful in business, you never saw money, even in business, as “the” goal.

It’s a measurement rather than a goal?
ROBERT BUFORD: Clearly so.

But as a score-keeping mechanism, it was important to me and easy to see.

I find now that I've undertaken this second career, that the score-keeping mechanism changes, and I need to be very conscious of that.

You can choose the game you're in but not the rules of the game.

As I have chosen a different game to play as a primary source of my own activity and identity, I've had to be very conscious of changes in the rules of that game.

It has required for me a real sense of clarity about mission and goals and about what comes first.

But there comes a time in everyone's life when one has to decide what the critical concerns are and what the subordinate concerns are.

PETER DRUCKER: You consider that the critical decision in developing oneself?

ROBERT BUFORD: It's critical to know who your master is.

And I think it's critical to update that understanding periodically.

I think I am a different person in terms of my desires and how I want to allocate my time, talent, and treasure in my mid-forties than I was in my twenties.

PETER DRUCKER: Has your behavior had to change a great deal, or do you do the same things but to a different purpose and to a different drummer?

ROBERT BUFORD: The latter, I think.

I find that what I do for my company is very similar to what I do for Leadership Network.

In both cases, I have to be clear about what the vision is so that other people can function successfully and can function as a team.

In both cases, I have to encourage and support other people in their work and make the work of either the business or Leadership Network clearly their work.

And in both cases, I have to maintain a critical set of relationships that teaches me what's going on in those two worlds.

PETER DRUCKER: Priorities might be quite different, though?

ROBERT BUFORD: Leadership Network is that which is exciting to me now.

Though I'm still in business, my business is now subordinated.

In my twenties, I subordinated my desire to be in the ministry.

PETER DRUCKER: Did you find it very difficult to make that change?

ROBERT BUFORD: I didn't find it difficult.

I found it rather like a change of season.

It just seemed to me in my mid-forties that it was time to get around to things that were eternal and of great significance and importance.
In doing so, I found that I had to make a great many changes in my business career.

PETER DRUCKER: What made you realize that the time had come?

Was it just success that enabled you to change, or did you kind of wake up one fine day and say, it’s time that I looked at myself?

ROBERT BUFORD: I think, first of all, I accumulated enough “score” to feel comfortable that I’d finished one game.

Secondly, a series of experiences have taught me that I am what St. Paul calls a “citizen of eternity.”

It was simply clear to me that it was time to get on with those concerns.

PETER DRUCKER: So, nothing sudden?

ROBERT BUFORD: Perhaps the difference is that I am now willing to listen to the calling that was there all along.

And I’m perhaps better equipped by the experiences of the last twenty years to serve in that calling.

I find I use the same entrepreneurial skills that I’ve had all along.

But I use them for a different purpose and in a different cause.

I find that it’s very important as you’re making these kinds of changes to have a little self-knowledge.

And I think my experience of these twenty years has taught me that where I belong is to be an entrepreneur functioning with a team.

PETER DRUCKER: Self-knowledge is as important as task knowledge.

And if you are skill-focused rather than task-focused, you miss a turn, so to speak.

You keep going down the old road but, all of a sudden, it leads nowhere.

Start on the outside is what you are saying.

Start with: What is the purpose?

Who is the master?

Then you use the same tools—but you build a different edifice.

ROBERT BUFORD: I think the two questions are the ones which you’ve taught in your books, and they’re enduring and important questions: Who is the customer?

And what does the customer consider value?

In Leadership Network, I have a different set of customers than I have in my business, and I have to be very sensitive to their values.

PETER DRUCKER: You’ve had significant achievements in both of your careers.

Is there any particular experience that helped you either to do the right things or avoid doing the wrong ones?

ROBERT BUFORD: Perhaps two experiences that came early in my life.

My mother gave me a great deal of responsibility early in life and a great deal of freedom to fail.
The second thing that was important to me is that I got caught off base a couple of times when I was quite young.

For the rest of my life I've assumed that anything I did in violation of the rules, I would get caught doing.

So, I've made it a rule that I'm simply not going to take shortcuts and cheat, because I assume I'll get caught.

And I find that's good discipline.

PETER DRUCKER: Can you remember any one person in your own company or in your own community who made you realize who really you are and who you might become?

For instance, I've heard you talk a great deal about how much you gave, but also how much you got from the Young Presidents Organization.

Was that one of the important relationships in your life?

ROBERT BUFORD: The Young Presidents Organization has been important in my life because it's given me a window into the real worlds of other executives.

I have chosen to live all my life in a town with a population of seventy-five thousand because it seems to me to be a sane environment to function from, and a caring and warm environment.

But it is a small town.

The Young Presidents Organization has provided me with access to sophisticated and successful people whom I would otherwise have been unlikely to meet.

PETER DRUCKER: That's why it's so important, I think, for people who work in an organization to have an outside interest, to meet people and not just become totally absorbed in their own small world.

And all worlds are small worlds.

That's particularly important for people in non-profit organizations because their work is so much more absorbing than it is in a business.

When you say to a business executive, you're working hard from nine to five, make sure you have some other interest—be a Scout Master, well, that gets a resonance.

But when you say to a pastor, perhaps you should go on the board of the local hospital, he says, I'm too busy.

He becomes a victim of his own organization.

One of the most successful—and busy—non-profit executives I know sits on several company boards.

She says that gives her a window on a different world—that she learns from doing that.

Let me ask you what important advice you have on self-development for people in non-profit service organizations?

You have seen more of them than almost anybody I know, worked with more of them through your pastoral churches and the service organization executives you work with in Leadership Network.
What would be the important advice?

ROBERT BUFORD: On either the business side or the non-profit side, stay in touch with your constituency, or you run the risk that they will change and you won’t.

You’ll be left a prisoner of your own tradition, a prisoner of the insiders in an organization and their desires, and will miss the role of a service organization, which is to serve.

PETER DRUCKER: I’m reminded that Gustav Mahler told his orchestra members they should sit in the audience at least twice a year so that they know what music sounds like to the listener.

A great pastor I knew years ago made it his habit to take off about four or five Sundays a year, go to other churches, and sit in the congregation.

Is that what you are telling me is important?

ROBERT BUFORD: A great pastor I know summers in the country and goes to small local churches all summer.

Another pastor I know makes it his practice to go to the offices of his members on a frequent and disciplined basis to meet them on their turf.

PETER DRUCKER: The best hospital administrators I know have themselves admitted once a year as a patient, go through the admission routine, and then spend a day just to see not only how their organization works but what it is like to be a patient.

So that’s one of the important development things.

Any other?

ROBERT BUFORD: It’s very important that the leader, and, for that matter, the whole leadership team, stay in touch with the seasonal changes within themselves.

We all have different experiences and levels of intensity in our mid-forties than we had in our mid-thirties.

And we will be entirely different in our mid-fifties when, perhaps, we’re, bored with our current careers, where we have achieved virtuosity and mastery in things which we used to think very challenging, but which are now yesterday’s work.

The Woman Executive in the Non-Profit Institution

Interview with Roxanne Spitzer-Lehmann *

PETER DRUCKER: Roxanne, what did the people who first promoted you from a nurse to a manager see in you that made them promote you?’

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: Organization skills, communications ability, and a great concern for the people I cared for as patients.

PETER DRUCKER: Can you identify where some of those traits came from?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: I was fortunate to have several mentors.
I think nursing education has also played a great role in terms of developing the ability to prioritize, to determine how and when to do something.

I think what’s going to happen in the health-care sector, particularly hospitals, is that more nurses will be moving ahead because of that organization ability, because of that ability to prioritize, because of communications skill and the technological knowledge that comes with it.

PETER DRUCKER: What role did your mentors play, Roxanne, in developing these organizational and human skills and in making you aware of their importance?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: I tend to be impatient.

And they’ve helped me look at the data before making a decision.

Helped me understand that my basic reaction to problems and/or situations was probably good, but I had to slow up prior to implementing or determining a course of action.

Certainly, they’ve taught me patience.

They’ve also allowed me to make mistakes as well, and I think that’s an important factor.

PETER DRUCKER: Any of them ever point out what you do well?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: There was a lot of positive reinforcement.

PETER DRUCKER: Now let me switch to something totally different, Roxanne.

Are you the only woman in the top management of the hospital chain today?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: Yes, I’m the only corporate officer who’s a woman.

PETER DRUCKER: And how many women are there in top management of major hospitals other than the Catholic Orders?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: Not many, but I think it’s increasing.

At the present time more are moving into chief operating officer and chief executive officer positions.

But certainly relative to an industry that has a very high percentage of females in it, it is very low.

Hospitals are very traditional; they are modeled very much on the military.

But I think necessity is the mother of invention.

And as the need for greater productivity, greater flexibility in roles, and ability to organize becomes imperative in this competitive marketplace, more women will be assuming those roles.

PETER DRUCKER: What advice would you give to women moving into positions of leadership in an institution in which women were very much subordinates, owing absolute obedience to the all-powerful physician who always was a man?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: Any advice I’d give to an executive would
probably not be limited to gender.
I think that women probably have to do it a little better, and a little harder.
But, in fact, the greatest attribute a woman can have going into any organization, and health-care particularly, is to **play as a team member**.
Not to be isolationist, not to be territorial.
To be willing to give up in order to have the organization move.
To help others give up departments, give up responsibilities; look at matrix organizations as opportunities, not as a loss of power; look at the development of others.

It's been very interesting to my colleagues and myself (and I don't believe I'm alone in this) that as more females enter the medical staff, it has been more difficult for them to work with the other females in the organization than it is for the male physician.

Maybe these women physicians are having such difficulty in making it in the male-dominated medical world that they need to be a little bit more aggressive and not quite as supportive to their female colleagues.

I think that's a major mistake—for any woman to play the role of queen bee.
That is pushing herself away from other women and not working with them to develop them.

Of course, women did not usually learn how to play football on a team or baseball, and when one becomes an executive, learning how to play football or baseball with the guys is a real key to success.

PETER DRUCKER: You work pretty closely with a very powerful, very proud board.
Did they find it awkward to accept a woman at first?
Especially the women on the board?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: My board, like any other hospital board, is predominantly male-dominated.
It's only been the last several years that women have been on the board, and there is only one woman now on the executive committee of the board.
The women board members have been highly supportive.
Those women are generally competent, well-developed business women in their own right, are very comfortable with themselves, and don't need to achieve at the expense of someone else.
The women are not a problem at all on the board.
The men are very interesting, depending upon age groups.
The older age group certainly had some difficulty accepting a woman in a corporate position.
The younger age group is used to working with women, I think, out in the real world.
There's a strong sense of paternalism in hospitals.
On one hand, it's very protective of me as their only woman vice-president.

On the other hand, they make it somewhat clear that they don't really consider me chief executive officer material.

That's not universal, but we do talk about it a little.

PETER DRUCKER: Can you think of a specific example of a time when you felt you had broken through these barriers?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: When I did a presentation to the board about a financial program, instead of just reporting on patient care and aspects of clinical delivery services and patient satisfaction and quality-assurance kinds of things.

The board suddenly realized that I knew a lot about the profit and loss statement.

In fact, I'm about to do another report to the board on my Home Care Department, which is highly profitable.

As they see that I'm responsible for the financial aspects as well as the delivery of services, I'm watching a breakthrough occur.

PETER DRUCKER: How did you acquire the skills necessary for you to do that?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: First, from a mentor in my very early years as a director of nursing.

I was fortunate to have a mentor from the university who insisted that I learn up front what man-hours per patient per day meant, and how to determine salaries.

So, I was always a little bit ahead, I think, of the market in terms of that.

Then, of course, being responsible teaches you.

My budget now is about $75 million.

One learns very rapidly how to look at bottom lines and how to make sure expenses do not exceed revenue, although that's quite difficult today.

And, of course, pursuing my doctoral degree in Executive Management at Claremont has been tremendously helpful by crystallizing the details.

I had no great problems with overall bottom lines, but I've become almost as astute as our financial department, I think, which makes them a little nervous.

PETER DRUCKER: What about the people skills?

A nurse is aware of people and their needs.

But she is not really aware of working in an organization.

How did you acquire people skills when you moved into the director of nursing position and suddenly worked with sixty, seventy, two hundred other nurses and patients, and had to coordinate nursing with other departments of that New York hospital in which you started out?

Did you have to learn the skills, or did they just come naturally?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: I think some people skills come naturally.
The ability to coordinate and communicate is something that one learns somewhat through trial and error, somewhat through humility by being willing to listen and to learn when one has made an error in communication.

One learns to say, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean it that way."

I think that's a real factor.

I think I've always had a vision about what I thought patient care should be and how I thought it should be delivered.

I've never had a great problem communicating my vision and then moving toward it.

And I've been fortunate in how people buy into that vision with me.

It's easy to work with people when you have something in common that makes some sense, that's goal-oriented.

So, I think people skills are very much based upon communicating a common goal.

And then, of course, you learn over time how many errors you make when you didn't communicate correctly.

PETER DRUCKER: So, you would say the first thing is that vision—which is probably the reason why you went into nursing in the first place, or at least why you stayed in nursing—that vision is really the basis?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN I believe so.

I think I also had a cause about women, since nursing is predominantly a female profession.

I graduated in the sixties when women were not in very powerful positions, so I had kind of a cause for nursing.

PETER DRUCKER: So you came in with a vision and a cause and the desire to communicate it—really the desire to be a leader.

And nobody ever said in those early years, "Roxanne, don't be pushy"?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: Oh, they still say that.

And I was very pushy.

I don't know how many times my bosses and my colleagues have said to me: "Girl, you are aggressive!"

But when one really believes in something, it's very hard not to be aggressive.

How can anyone argue with "We're not delivering patient care in a way that is best for the patient"?

The patient should determine how his or her body should be serviced.

That shouldn't be determined by procedures that hospitals design.

I came out believing that in the very early years.

PETER DRUCKER: Roxanne, you shock me.

In forty years of working in the health-care sector, I've heard nothing but people saying,
“Don’t listen to the patient. We know what’s right.”

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: I don’t know how that’s possible. I think patients may not have all the knowledge necessary to make decisions.

But it’s our responsibility to help them gain that knowledge so that they can make informed decisions.

PETER DRUCKER: So you would say that for any institution that is the starting point—What are we really here for?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: If you don’t know the mission, you shouldn’t be around.

PETER DRUCKER: Roxanne, you’re clearly a woman with a mission.

I’d be curious to know how you structure your life and your work to make that mission a reality.

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: Well, it’s very hectic, I can tell you that—having a full-time job, and a teenage daughter, and still going to school. In fact, going to school and working helped me keep my mission very focused.

As does a fifteen-year-old daughter who is one tremendous conscience asking, “Why, Mommy, do you do all of these things?”

One is, of course, self-driven, not always just by a mission but by a need to accomplish.

If I didn’t have the mission, I’d get a much easier job.

Or I’d lie on the beach all day in Southern California.

That temptation frequently comes to mind—until a situation occurs in which a really focused intervention can improve either the service delivery or the quality of life of my employees, then the temptation to lie on the beach disappears fast and I am glad I have a tough job.

And now we, in the hospital, face more and more of these challenges.

PETER DRUCKER: A little before your time, the hospital was a very simple organization, with doctors and nurses and a few people who cleaned up.

Now it’s becoming terribly complicated all those specialties, all those services.

And you see your mission as focusing all of them on that common objective, the patients, who should leave the hospital at least no worse than when they came in.

At the end of the year, how do you know whether you have helped make that mission a greater reality?

What are the areas of success?

What are the areas where you have to do better?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: Well, there are two ways.

One is concrete and one is abstract.
The concrete is really easy to describe.

I keep a pad on the right side of my desk which I add to or modify, perhaps every two weeks, once a month. On one side it lists the major undertakings that I have to do, and on the other side it lists those that are in process, to whom they’ve been delegated, and what the status is.

When they’re completed, I just put a single line through them. At the end of the year, I take a look at this and I’m always overwhelmed at how much we have accomplished.

We put together an annual report based upon that.

I also use management-by-objectives to some degree. That is a really concrete way of seeing how we’ve moved forward.

On an abstract level, I certainly take a look at how I do on my academic work toward my doctorate. Every course I pass seems to be a benchmark toward the future. But other than that I think it is very difficult.

I never feel that I’ve done enough or that I’ve achieved enough.

PETER DRUCKER: May I switch completely?

You talked about your being responsible for, a budget of well over $70 million and for the financial performance of quite a few services.

Where do you see the most important differences, in your work as an executive and professional, between a business organization and a non-profit service organization?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: In the health-care sector, we have become so like industry in terms of having to be competitive, in terms of having to be bottom-line-oriented, that I see my role little different from anyone working at General Motors, or Xerox, or IBM.

I have a product to deliver.

I have to deliver it cost-effectively.

I have to make sure that the consumers are satisfied.

And they shouldn’t have to return—though, certainly, if the need arises, you want them to come back to your institution.

We’re in a business.

We have competition around us, especially in Southern California.

We have to deliver something better.

Something better and at the right price.

That’s not very different than Procter & Gamble.

PETER DRUCKER: Roxanne, you haven’t really talked much about self-development.

You have mentioned mentors.

You have mentioned that pad of yours in which you put down your tasks and your accomplishments.
But you haven’t really talked much about developing yourself.

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: I think the best self-development is developing others.

I’m fortunate enough that people will tell me when I’m wrong, when I come on too strong, and when I don’t give them enough time to do their own thinking.

PETER DRUCKER: What are you doing to encourage your associates to grow and develop themselves? What are the things that have been most effective?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: My role is not to give the answers. My role is to facilitate their brainstorming and thinking. And then to pull it together into something that we all go out and implement.

My job is to establish the goal and the vision. Their job is to figure out how we can do it together.

And I believe that allowing, promoting, giving people the time—time is an important element—the skills, the tools, and the environment to do that has enhanced my self-improvement.

I’ve become relatively well known in the industry because my staff has been so creative in what we determine together.

If I were to leave tomorrow, I don’t think it would make much difference. They would carry on.

PETER DRUCKER: You come from a profession which is known for a high degree of what’s frequently called burnout—people feeling the pressures are just too great.

There must be days or weeks when you feel that pressure.

How do you renew yourself?

ROXANNE SPITZER-LEHMANN: That’s a question the whole industry is asking, with the nursing shortage looming as a major catastrophe. Self-renewal comes from feeling good about oneself. The nurses at the bedsides can feel good about themselves if they’re given the autonomy and control to do what they do best.

My self-renewal comes from being given autonomy, respect, the control to take a project from the beginning to the end without a lot of interference in getting it done.

The best example I can give you of that was when we first opened our outpatient surgery center.

Everybody had been diddling with it for years until I finally said, “Would you just let me do it? Would you just let me put together the elements and carry it through?”

It was given to me lock, stock, and barrel, and we did it.

I got a great deal of self-renewal from that.
Developing Yourself

My other self-renewal comes from a personal life. I like to cook. I love the theater. I love music. I've learned how to ski in the last year and fall down a great deal, which has been great for self-renewal. And I like to travel.

That's all self-renewal.

PETER DRUCKER: Well, that's a classical answer to burnout. The way to overcome burnout is to work much harder. And it apparently works for you. I must testify it also works for me. But then you have enough things that are totally different from your work. The theater, falling down on the ski slope, music—you change mental and emotional gears a little bit.

I think that's very important.

Let me try to pick out a few major strands.

To me, the most telling thing you said is, “If! were to leave tomorrow, I don’t think it would make much difference. They would carry on.”

That's about the proudest boast any executive can make, to have built the team that will perpetuate my work, my vision, my institution.

That, in my experience, really distinguishes the true achiever.

Then you stressed the importance of the mission and of the focus on the desired results: cured patients.

And you stressed again and again team building.

That is leadership in developing others, which can be the most important key to self-development.

Summary: The Action Implications

The best way for me to start this summary on self-development is to tell you about the man who first made me aware of what that means as a lifelong process.

He was a Jewish rabbi whom I first met in the early 1950s on a mountain trail.

We became hiking companions for many years because we both spent vacations in the same summer resort and liked hiking.

Joshua Abrams had been in law school when World War II broke out, went into the Navy and was badly wounded.

In fact, he never fully recovered, and the injuries eventually caused his death thirty-five years later.
He went into a seminary when he came out of the service and, when I first met him, he had just begun to build—from scratch—a synagogue and Jewish community center in a major Midwestern city.

Just ten years later it was one of the largest Reformed Jewish synagogues in the country, with four to five thousand members.

So, I was very surprised on a walk one day when he said, “By the way, Peter, I’ve decided to leave the synagogue and start all over again.”

I looked at him, clearly without understanding, and he continued, “I don’t learn anything anymore.”

A year later, he told me he had decided to go into youth ministry and take over the chaplainship at a major Midwestern university.

This was about 1964-65.

Joshua explained:

“I’m still young enough so that I understand what troubles the kids and I’m old enough to have experience with most of the things that they are going through.

They’re going to be in trouble.”

Sure enough, the student unrest started not too long afterward and my friend was a tower of strength.

Through the years I’ve met people who say, “I understand you know Josh Abrams?

He saved my life when I was twenty years old and about to destroy myself by going into drugs … or by doing this, that or the other stupid thing.”

Then, around 1973-74, Josh surprised me again during one of our walks:

“I think I’ve done all I can do as a university chaplain.

I’m no longer young enough to be in tune with the kids.

I’ve been thinking about it and have decided that the need now is for a ministry for old people.

That’s where the population growth is.”

He quit the university a year or two later, moved to one of the retirement cities in Arizona, and started all over again building from scratch.

By the time he died, his new community of retired people was three to four thousand strong.

He looked for people who were lonely, who had lost their spouses, who were sick, and he not only brought them spiritual comfort but helped meet their physical needs as well as he could.

Joshua was the first person who explained something to me that I have, in turn, repeated to many, many people:

“You are responsible for allocating your life.

Nobody else will do it for you.”

And the pattern of his life makes clear that when we talk of self-development, we mean two things:

developing the person, and developing the skill, competence, and ability
Developing Yourself begins by serving, by striving toward an idea outside of yourself—not by leading.

Leaders are not born, nor are they made—they are self-made.

To do this, a person needs focus.

Michael Kami, our leading authority on business strategy today, draws a square on the blackboard and asks:

“Tell me what to put in there.

Jesus?

Or money?

I can help you develop a strategy for either one, but you have to decide which is the master.”

I do it by asking people what they want to be remembered for—that’s “the beginning of adulthood,” according to St. Augustine.

The answer changes as we mature—as it should.

But unless that question is asked, a person works without focus, without direction, and, as a result, does not develop.

You start by developing your own strengths, adding skills and putting them to productive work.

There is much a boss can do to contribute to this development.

But no matter how much a boss drives you—or ignores you—ultimately it is the individual’s own responsibility to work on his or her own development.

Developing your strengths does not mean ignoring your weaknesses.

On the contrary, one is always conscious of them.

But one can only overcome weakness by developing strengths.

Don’t take shortcuts.

You don’t have to be a perfectionist but you certainly should refuse to accept your own shoddy work.

Above all, workmanship builds your own self-respect as it builds your own competence.

Next, you work on the tasks to be done, the opportunities to be explored:

And you start with the task, not with yourself.

Achievement comes from matching need and opportunity on the outside with competence and strength on the inside.

The two have to meet—and the two have to match.

Effective self-development must proceed along two parallel streams.

One is improvement—to do better what you already do reasonably well.

The second is change—to do something different.

Both are essential.
It is a mistake to focus only on change and forget what you already do well.

One works constantly on doing a little better, identifying the little step that will make the next step possible.

But it is equally foolish to focus only on improvement and forget that the time will inevitably come to do something new and quite different.

Listening for the signal that it is time to change is an essential skill for self-development.

Change when you are successful—not when you’re in trouble.

Look carefully at your daily work, your daily tasks, and ask:

“Would I go into this today knowing what I know today?

Am I producing results or just relaxing in a comfortable routine, spending effort on something that no longer produces results?”

Self-development becomes self-renewal when you walk a different path, become aware of a different horizon, move toward a different destination.

This is a time when outside help, a mentor, can provide useful help.

The more achievement-minded and successful you are, the more likely you are to be immersed in the task at hand, immersed, above all, in the urgent.

A wise outsider who knows what you are trying to do, who has often been doing similar things, is the one who can ask you:

“Does it still make sense?

Are you still getting the most out of yourself?”

The means for self-development are not obscure.

Many achievers have discovered that teaching is one of the most successful tools.

The teacher usually learns far more than the student.

Not everybody is in a situation where the opportunity to teach opens up, nor is everyone good at teaching or enjoying it.

But everyone has an associated opportunity—the opportunity to help develop others.

Everyone who has sat down with subordinates or associates in an honest effort to improve their performance or results understands what a potent tool the process is for self-development.

Probably the best of the nuts and bolts of self-development is the practice of keeping score on yourself.

It's also the best lesson in humility, as I can tell you from personal experience.

It is always painful for me to see how great the gap is between what I should have done and what I did do.

But, slowly, I improve—both in setting goals and in achieving results.

Keeping score helps me focus my efforts in areas where I have impact and to slough off projects where nothing is happening, where I’m wasting not
only my own resources but also those of my clients or students.

Self-development is neither a philosophy nor good intentions.

Self-renewal is not a warm glow.

Both are action.

You become a bigger person, yes; but, most of all, you become a more effective and committed person.

So, I conclude by asking you to ask yourself, what will you do tomorrow as a result of reading this book?

And what will you stop doing?

¹ Robert Buford is chairman and CEO of Buford Television, Inc., in Tyler, Texas. He has founded two non-profit institutions, Leadership Network and the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for NonProfit Management.

² Roxanne Spitzer-Lehmann is corporate vice-president of St. Joseph Health System, a chain of non-profit hospitals headquartered in Orange, California.

She is the author of *Nursing Productivity* (Chicago, 1986).