

Leading with Intention: The Power of Must, Will, and Now



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INTRODUCTION

In my work with leaders across continents and organizations, I see a common thread. No matter what level of leader I am working with or what part of the world I am working in, once leaders begin to intentionally choose who they want to be and the impact they want to have, their effectiveness exponentially rises, both in their leadership and in their lives.... Every interaction—whether you're presenting to an entire organization or talking one-on-one with a colleague—is an opportunity to influence and inspire others to achieve extraordinary results. Leading with Intention makes the connection between your leadership behavior and the bottom line and challenges you to make a profound, deliberate mark on both your organization and the world around you. (Hall, 2014, xii)

Mary Anne Radmacher wrote *Live with Intention* as a treatise to guide her life as a business owner, author, poet, and artist. Her intention, in 1993, was to live and lead from this purpose statement. Since then millions of people around the world, including the two authors of this chapter, have been guided by *Live with Intention*. We focus on the application of Radmacher's writing to leadership, and offer examples of how each element of her treatise can fuel success and bring fulfillment to leaders, managers, and their followers.

While living a life quite dissimilar to Radmacher's, Army Major Ross D. Bryant began, in 2003, to write "Leadership Under Fire," his own treatise about life in the trenches, on the battlefield, in the conference room, and at home. He created 365 messages, one for each day of the year. While Bryant intended to publish them, life intervened. He had many leadership-under-fire moments in his career in the military, faced economic and personal hardship, and literally had to rebuild his life with a few pieces of furniture, an empty bank account, and some treasured books, including his manuscript of "Leadership Under Fire." Today, Bryant is the Director of Veteran Services at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas and leads over 1,500 new veteran students each year in learning the tenets he has not only written about but strives to practice daily.

In this chapter, we seek to amplify the application of *Live with Intention* to the real world of leadership by pairing each line of Radmacher's purpose statement with messages from Bryant's "Leadership Under Fire." In addition, we will offer perspectives from others we have interviewed, literature we have reviewed, and lessons we have learned in our more than 60 collective years of blending theory with practice as company executives, business consultants, teachers, and authors. Our intention in writing this chapter is to empower leaders, managers and their followers to fulfill their missions while living successful and happy lives.

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BACKGROUND

Type the first seven words of Radmacher's life purpose statement, "*Live with intention. Walk to the edge,*" in a search engine and more than 19,700,000 hits pop up. With the simple, carefully chosen words of *Live with Intention*, Radmacher created a path that millions have chosen to follow. Although she knows only a small percentage of her followers by name, there is no doubt Radmacher is a leader among leaders. Like many, she did not set her heart on being a leader in the traditional sense of the word; she simply wanted to live true to her inner wisdom. However, as she charted a path that fed her heart and soul, mind and body, others found *Live with Intention* to be their path as well. In 2010, Conari Press published Radmacher's book, *Live with Intention: Rediscovering What We Deeply Know*. Simple Truths publisher Mac Anderson convinced Radmacher to share her insights and experiences garnered from putting her treatise into practice via the book, *Life Begins When You Do* (2011).

There is a plethora of iterations, artists' renderings, and stories based on the impact of Radmacher's work. Many include application in businesses, workplaces, customer service, sales, boardroom meetings—anywhere and everywhere leaders are called upon to bring about results. And by leaders we mean not just those with positions of power. We include as leaders anyone who takes on the goal of moving beyond current circumstances to something new. Thus, in this chapter, we offer a broad perspective of what it is to be a leader, how each of us can "lead with intention" no matter where we find ourselves.

We also fully embrace DeRue's (2011) view that it is not better to be a leader than a follower; the two are different and they need each other. However, we go a step further. We postulate that one must be an effective follower to be an effective leader. Further, we support Hall's view (2014) that no matter where one falls in the organizational structure, each of us has the ability to positively shape the organization and world around us.

Radmacher's original statement from 1993 follows.

*Live with intention. Walk to the edge. Listen hard. Practice wellness. Play with abandon.
Laugh. Choose with no regret. Continue to learn. Appreciate your friends.
Do what you love. Live as if this is all there is. (Radmacher, personal communication, April 29, 2015)*

Radmacher later added two imperatives that are especially relevant to the topic of leadership: *Fail with enthusiasm* and *Lead or follow a leader*. In *Life Begins When You Do* (2011), the chapter titles feature each line of the poem in this manner:

*Live with intention – Investigate and define your purpose, your "must."
Walk to the edge – Begin as if you will finish.
Listen hard – Learn to hear the silence in between the notes.
Practice wellness – Create your own pharmacy.
Play with abandon.
Laugh – Watch what power play unleashes.
Choose with no regret – Own it!
Continue to learn – If you learn, there is no failure.
Fail with enthusiasm – Same song, new verse!
Lead or follow a leader – Remember a parade known as "you."
Appreciate your friends – Hold the hand of the world.*

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