



Leadership Emails

Leadership Emails

Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

January 20 – February 10, 2022

Kevin's Leadership Emails are powerful explorations into personal development, both inside and outside of the practice.

Enjoy reviewing all this transformational, thought-provoking content.

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What Do the Number 300, 16 Years and a Decade All Have in Common?

The Number 300

I was made aware that today's Leadership email is the 300th consecutive message I have created since beginning this chapter of the DST Experience. I still recall writing Message #1, and when I began, I had no idea that #300 would ever be on the radar. As I compose each message, I remain steadfast in believing there is at least one person who will benefit greatly from its content. Self-Doubt (Resistance) creeps in each week, attempting to sway me from completing the mission. For 300 consecutive weeks I have won the battle with Resistance.

This battle I face you also face in your own ways, every day you show up to the practice and are tasked with being positively influential with each patient scheduled for the day. It would be easy to "mail it in" and go about your day half-hearted, but instead, you make the decision to be the best, patient after patient, until you turn off the lights and lock the doors.

Personally, I would not have been able to deliver these messages without an incredible team of people here at DST who bring it all to life. They deserve all the credit for supporting me, especially when I have run up to the deadline (or beyond it) during weeks when inspiration for a message was lacking. I am blessed to be part of an extraordinary group of people who care so much about your success. Their empathy and understanding for me is remarkable. The #300 milestone is truly a team milestone, not just an individual milestone for me.

THANK YOU TEAM DST!

THANK YOU...to all of you who read these messages and send encouraging notes to me to keep up the effort!

All of this comes down to an unwavering COMMITMENT - personal commitment and team commitment - to execute and follow through!

16 Years

In order to reach the #300 milestone, I had to make a decision 16 years ago to begin sharing my knowledge, experience and success with others who were interested in their own personal and professional growth. I had no idea whether anyone would care or listen to what I wanted to share. Nevertheless, I took the risk believing the good intentions I had would result in a tidal wave of positive outcomes. I am blessed to have had such success since taking on this mission of helping others achieve their goals in life and business.

The business I created only became what it is today because of the team I built to help support its growth and effectiveness. It has taken a dedication to execution and innovation to maintain its trajectory when it comes to serving those who respond to the mission of personal and professional growth, the mentoring I do and investing in young entrepreneurs as they navigate their own dreams and desires to change the world.

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You too made a similar decision to begin your journey in the dental and/or specialty health industry. Your future was uncertain and your ability to create positive outcomes was not guaranteed. Yet, you made the decision and continue to show up each day to help positively influence patients to make smart decisions about their health. I am certain you have a never-ending list of positive outcomes from those you have served, whether you have been in the industry one day or 50 years.

Even when uncertainty exists, we continue to show up, put in the effort and believe good will come from our intentions.

This takes COMMITMENT!

A commitment to take a risk, going into the unknown with the belief you will provide enough value to leave others better off for having made the choice to seek your care and guidance.

A Decade

Arguably, the #1 reason I am here documenting milestone #300 is because of the love and support of my wife, Julie. Monday was our wedding anniversary. It was and always will be a special reminder of how lucky I am to have her support and encouragement; it has propelled me forward in all I do in life and business.

I remember with such clarity the first day we met at a local coffee shop in Muskego, WI with the original intention of discussing a collaboration to help each other in our business objectives. After spending less than an hour with her, I knew she was going to be my wife. I simply had to figure out how to get her on board with my vision!

The last 10 years have been the best years of my life because I chose them to be. Based upon the failures in past relationships, I knew how important it was to make commitments for what could create a relationship filled with genuine joy and love.

Julie and I covered all the major aspects of life and created appropriate expectations about where we stand on the various topics which ranged from spending time with each other's families...children...faith...the list goes on. We had the "hard" conversations early on to make sure we were in alignment to avoid future disagreements or surprises. I am proud to say that we have not had a major argument about anything because we took the time to communicate about what we believe and how we feel.

I could go on, but will skip ahead and sum up the success of our relationship and marriage:

We take the time to communicate about everything by listening to each other and responding rather than reacting to whatever each of us say and how we feel about all we experience together. It takes a unified approach to create a successful family unit based in love. It takes a release of one's ego in order to put the family and team first. This all started with taking a risk to ask for a first date a decade ago.

Julie and I are a team first and individuals second. Julie has helped me see myself in a different light, and has helped me more than anyone else ever has. There are no egos here.

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Julie showed me how I deserved to have a relationship with an extraordinary woman and did not have to settle for anything less.

Julie reminded me that I would be a great husband who would love and support her as any woman deserved.

Julie opened my eyes and convinced me that I would be an awesome father and would not recreate the negative experience I had with my own dad.

Julie affirmed the importance of having a God-centered marriage, which keeps our focus on what matters the most above our own selfish desires.

Julie is the glue that keeps Team Kowalke together moving forward in love and harmony.

Our steadfast COMMITMENT to each other and our family unit is what has created such an extraordinary friendship, marriage and faith-based family culture! Team Kowalke is thriving.

My description of the last decade applies to all of you and how you function as a team.

By now, I hope you have come to your own conclusions as to how this message can bring to light an opportunity for you to amplify your influence for the greater good with your team, patients and those you spend time with in your personal life.

The Number 300, 16 Years and a Decade have shared with me many overlapping lessons. Today, I share the distillation of those lessons and offer it to you. If you choose, harness the wisdom therein as a way to touch base with your own progress and sense of worth:

- It takes a COMMITMENT to anything you want to accomplish in life!
- It takes COURAGE to embrace RISK.
- It takes a SERVANT mindset to create an extraordinary experience for all.
- It takes ACTION and FOLLOW-THROUGH to create positive outcomes.
- It takes BELIEF in yourself to create worthy accomplishments.
- It takes a TEAM mindset, leaving the desires of self behind, in an attempt to create a world-class experience for all.
- It takes RELEASING YOUR EGO and approaching your relationships and interactions with LOVE and KINDNESS.
- It takes BATTLING the RESISTANCE that lies within, all day, every day.
- It takes DESIRE to create an extraordinary life that leaves you feeling fulfilled and full of joy.

Here is to the next major milestone for all of us in life!

Today...Choose to Be Extraordinary!

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You Are...

We are about to wrap up the first month of 2022. It has been a fast-paced, interesting start, with many different experiences shared from teams all over North America. As it is in all instances, you have direct influence over what kind of year you will have based upon your attitude and focus. It has been exciting to hear specific stories of team members who are showing a deep commitment to making a difference in their patients' lives and within their respective teams.

One of my favorite conversations to have is when I hear a team member share a positive, celebratory story about another team member's contribution to creating a positive outcome. I appreciate the mindset it takes to highlight others and be complimentary of their accomplishments. It is easy to speak about yourself. It takes a humble nature to highlight others.

I write on this topic today because I want to remind all of you about the impact you have as leaders...yes...leaders! I believe to my core that you do not need a title to be a leader. For me, leadership is a mindset. It is a decision you make to serve others in a strong and confident manner to help lead a person to a positive outcome.

I was impressed with a testimony shared by a hygienist about an assistant who "saved the day" by staying late to help with a difficult patient who she had a connection with, even though the assistant had a timely personal commitment she would ultimately end up being late to.

The hygienist stated how the assistant overheard (from outside the operatory) how a conversation was going and decided to take the risk of "interrupting" to calm the patient down from being overly anxious about the treatment their doctor diagnosed. Not only did she calm the patient down, but ended up helping the patient change her mind to commitment to the treatment plan so she could get back to an optimal state of health.

In this case, the assistant chose to be a leader in multiple ways. She chose to put the patient and her teammate first to help them both out. She put her own self-interests on hold in order to be a supportive teammate. She chose to serve. What a tremendous display of leadership without having any sort of official title. She chose to help because it is who she is and how she chooses to live out her life.

This topic reminds me of a quote I recently came across in a daily motivational calendar that was given to me as a gift last week:

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader."

- John Quincy Adams

You have the ability to help your teammates and patients dream of what is possible to achieve.

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You have the ability to help your teammates and patients learn more about how to achieve positive outcomes in life.

You have the ability to help your teammates and patients do more with their careers and their health.

You have the ability to help your teammates and patients become more through your care and influence.

Adams' wise words are a great reminder of how any one of us can add value in the lives of others simply by choosing to be a person of positive influence (a leader) as you choose to serve. You all inspire me to do everything I can to help you become more influential through your words and actions. Your stories are the fuel that keeps momentum moving forward.

Your influence and leadership extend far beyond the four walls of your practice. You have the opportunity to be a leader in all areas of life. Adams' statement can be applied to your family, friends, spouse and children...just to highlight a few people who can benefit from your efforts.

You are extraordinary...should you choose to be!

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Vitally Engaged

I am composing today's message while on a flight to Nashville for back-to-back live training events to kick off the new year. It is exciting and invigorating to feel the positive vibes and energy everyone has when we are all gathered together and focused on a unified vision: to become more influential in helping patients make a commitment to their optimal health. As I review the content for one of my upcoming presentations, I am moved to share an excerpt with all of you who are willing to engage with me.

"The Champion's Mind" by Jim Afremow has been an inspirational book for me when sharing my perspective on what it takes to be a true champion. There are a multitude of commonalities between high achieving athletes, which is the focus of Afremow's book, and those who achieve high levels of accomplishments within their given professional careers. One phrase that has stood out to me ever since reading the book for the first time lies in the beginning paragraph of his introduction, a place where it could be easily missed by those who decide to skip it and dive right into the chapter content.

"The challenging plan presented in this book details how you can reach your pinnacle of athletic excellence and become a champion in your sport or fitness activity, whether you are a high school, college, recreational, professional, or an Olympic athlete. It means you will be vitally engaged in all areas of your game and life by doing your best at what you value most. You will get the job done and rise to the occasion in your championship moment."

This three-sentence opening paragraph truly "packs a punch." Allow me to extract the athletic references and have you read it in a way that applies directly to your choice of career and industry.

"The challenging plan presented in this book details how you can reach your pinnacle of career excellence and become a champion in your own specific role within your practice whether you are brand new to the industry or a seasoned professional. It means you will be vitally engaged in all areas of your career and life by doing your best at what you value most. You will get the job done and rise to the occasion in your championship moment."

First, when you read, "...how can you reach your pinnacle of career excellence," what comes to mind?

How would you define "excellence?"

What standards come to mind?

Second, when you read, "...and become a champion," what vision is created?

What are the characteristics of a "champion" within your practice?

Third, what does it mean to you to be "vitally engaged?"

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Until reading Afremow's book, I do not recall seeing the words "vitaly engaged" put together. The combination takes the concept of engagement to another stratosphere. It became so clear to me why the best-of-the-best perform with so few on their level.

Lastly, what do you *"value most?"*

I highly encourage you to take the the variation of the excerpt I shared along with the questions I posed and turn it into a team meeting. I would print out this message, hand it out to everyone, and ask each person to come prepared to share their thoughts in 7-10 days. I implore you to spend quality time in reflection as you ponder what all of this means to you.

This exercise creates a powerful movement for each team DST serves, whether you are completely connected or feel disconnected. For those of you who are completely connected, it will allow you to have a greater understanding as to why you are performing at a high level and what areas contain opportunity for further growth. For those of you who feel disconnected to some degree, it will help you expose the areas you want to shore up by allocating time, energy, and attention to where you are lacking.

The areas you focus your mind and effort on will directly influence the results you achieve, both as individuals and as a team. How you choose to spend your time will create a future vision of what your outcomes will be.

The world-famous astronaut Neil Armstrong once said, *"I believe every human has a finite number of heartbeats. I don't intend to waste any of mine."*

His comment is so obvious, yet do we ever consistently take the time to assess how we spend our time throughout each day? My challenge to you above will help you make those moments valuable and worthy of your attention.

Make every heartbeat valuable!

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Friend vs. Enemy

Today is day two of being home with my family in Florida after spending the last week in Nashville, where we hosted back-to-back training events to kick off the year. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces over the course of the week while also connecting with a vast number of new doctors and team members as we embark on a new journey together. I was impressed how engaged everyone was with a collective spirit of excitement and enthusiasm.

On our final day of training, I traditionally spend half the day with everyone exploring the opportunities we all have to advance our efforts in our own growth and development. I decided to introduce a brand new presentation this year for all of our first-time attendees at the Practice Champions Event. I was well-prepared and excited to push the limits on my ability to pass on my experiences in an influential way in hopes I could be a catalyst for people to make commitments to positive change.

At various moments throughout breaks in the presentation I was approached by many people who shared kind and supportive words about my message and efforts. One team member in particular, who I just met at the event for the first time, shared a brief personal testimony as to how a particular part of the message hit home in a way she had never experienced before regarding awareness of whether your mind was working as your “friend” or your “enemy.” Allow me to explain.

This team member said to me, “Kevin, I have heard people talk about how your mind works, referencing being a positive thinker or a negative thinker, but never by saying as a friend or an enemy. It immediately made me recall current situations where my mind was definitely my enemy and now I realize why certain conversations did not go the way I planned. Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences with us: this is going to change my life in so many ways. I encourage you to share this with as many people as possible. I am certain there are a lot of people who need to connect with this concept, as I believe they may have a clarifying moment just like me.”

Her message acted as fuel to help me press on and finish my presentation with even more passion and conviction than when I started. She was so kind in her compliments and encouraging in her words. To give credit where credit is due, it was the author, Shirzad Charminé (in the book *Positive Intelligence*), who wrote about this using the language of “friend” and “enemy.” I simply brought his words to life by expounding upon them with personal stories and examples in an attempt to connect the concept with suggestions on how to shift your mind into spending more time as your friend.

In an attempt to be brief, I will share some of the author’s words to introduce his concept of “Positive Intelligence.”

“A High Positive Intelligence means your mind acts as your friend more than your enemy. A Low Positive Intelligence means your mind acts as your enemy more than your friend. Positive Intelligence is therefore an indication of the control you have over your own mind and how well your mind acts in your best interest...Positive Intelligence determines how much of your true potential you actually achieve.”

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Allow me to share an example so you can associate the concept to real life situations you find yourself in all day long.

Your mind acting as your friend:

"Mr. Smith is coming in today and he has been saying 'no' to his treatment plan for years now. But today, I am ready with a new approach and different way of presenting it and I believe I have a chance to get him to say 'yes' this time!"

Your mind acting as your enemy:

"Mr. Smith is coming in today and he always says 'no' to any treatment we present to him, so I shouldn't even bring it up to him because he is going to say 'no' again and always will. Why should I put in the effort if he doesn't care? I don't need him to stress me out anymore than I already am. I will be happy when his appointment is over today."

I would like to believe we all would prefer our mind to support us rather than defeat us all day long, especially given the amount of time we spend in thought throughout a given day. It is hard enough battling all of the negativity life throws at us without making our own contribution to the madness.

Regardless of where you are on the spectrum, I encourage you to pause for a moment and imagine how you would feel if you spent more time with your mind acting as your friend.

- How many problems would you now see as opportunities?
- How many more moments of happiness would you experience rather than disappointment?
- How much more energy would you have at the end of the day?
- How much more engaged would you be with those you choose to spend time with, both in your personal and professional life?
- How much more could you achieve without needing more time, but simply by choosing constructive thoughts rather than destructive thoughts?

According to the author, if your mind works as your friend at least 75% of the time, you then have the ability to achieve your true potential and be genuinely happy in life. He states only 20% of people (he did a study of 275,000 people, which is seriously impressive) can achieve this kind of control over their thoughts. I love having a target to focus on so we can create an objective worthy of our efforts.

I have a challenge for you: try being on high alert for one day – just one day – and simply be aware of your thought patterns.

Examine where your thoughts fall on the spectrum of friend vs enemy.

Make an educated estimate of the percentage of time your mind was your friend and how often it was your enemy.

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You hear me say it (or write it) all the time: AWARENESS is the key.

Awareness of your thoughts.

Awareness of your actions.

Awareness of what influences you allow into your mind.

Being highly aware of what is going on in and around you gives you the power to manage your thoughts and feelings. I hope you choose to heighten your awareness and commit to follow through with an advanced level of management when it comes to your mind.

I promise you will be quite pleased with the outcome!

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