



Zebras & Cheetahs



Look Different and Stay Agile to Survive
the Business Jungle

Micheal J. Burt & Colby B. Jubenville

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Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.
Published simultaneously in Canada.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Burt, Micheal J.

Zebras and cheetahs : look different and stay agile to survive the business jungle/
Micheal J. Burt and Colby B. Jubenville.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-118-63180-5 (cloth); ISBN 978-1-118-64478-2 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-64477-5 (ebk); ISBN 978-1-118-64470-6 (ebk)

1. Organizational change.
2. Organizational effectiveness.
3. Organizational behavior.
4. Leadership. I. Jubenville, Colby B., 1971–II. Title.

HD58.8.B8836 2013

658.4'09—dc23

2013001368

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

From Micheal

To my new beautiful daughter, Ella Grace. Here's hoping that one day you become the Zebras and Cheetahs Leader we discuss in the book and beat to your own drum, stand out versus fit in, and get better versus merely getting along.

From Colby

To my parents, who taught me to look different, my children, who help me run faster, and my wife, who challenges me to be agile.

Contents

| | | |
|------------------------|---|--------------|
| <i>Foreword</i> | <i>Joe Calloway</i> | <i>ix</i> |
| <i>Preface</i> | | <i>xi</i> |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | | <i>xxvii</i> |
| 1 | The Concrete Jungle | 1 |
| 2 | The Landscape of the Concrete Jungle | 21 |
| 3 | You and Your Tribe | 57 |
| 4 | The 21st Century Compass: Creating A Dominant Focus | 97 |
| 5 | The Zebras and Cheetahs Model: Making Growth Simple, Engaging, and Fun | 127 |
| 6 | Battle-Testing Your Tribe | 169 |
| | <i>About the Authors</i> | <i>203</i> |

Foreword

Most forewords tell you about the book you're about to read. I'd rather you just read it for yourself.

Let me tell you a little about why you should be interested in what Micheal and Colby have to say in this book.

Everybody needs a coach. Whether you're trying to lose weight or build a business, a coach can make all the difference in the world, all the difference between success and failure. Micheal is a coach in the best sense of the word. He challenges, he encourages, he provokes, he supports, he calls you on your "stuff," he helps you discover strengths that you didn't even know you had.

Colby is a strategist. Colby helps answer the tough question. First let's identify the easy question: The easy question is "What should I do?" I think that on some level, almost everybody knows what to do. The tough question is "How do I do it?" That's strategy, and without a sound strategy the knowledge of what to do is useless.

The combination of a great coach and a great strategist creates a unique perspective for understanding and a powerful force for action.

The metaphors of Zebras and Cheetahs, the Concrete Jungle, the 10,000-pound Gorilla, and more that are used in this book make perfect sense. Micheal and Colby have

taken concepts like dominant aspiration and made them useful, and that's the difference between this book and so many others about success in life, career, and business.

There's great skill involved in making challenging ideas simple and understandable. Whether in their speaking, their consultative work with clients, on their radio show, or in this book, Micheal and Colby demonstrate that skill in spades, and the beneficiary (in the case of this book) is you. If you're like me, you'll find yourself nodding your head in agreement and recognition as you read this book. You'll have that sense of "Hey, that's exactly what I'm going through" throughout the text.

But the true payoff isn't just that Micheal and Colby feel your pain—it's that they've got the cure. It's not silver bullets. It's not secrets of success. It's in ways of looking at, thinking about, and taking action on your challenges and opportunities that make absolute sense. The real payoff is when you find yourself thinking "Hey! I can do this stuff!" It's the inspiration and the how-to's that move you to take action that can change your career and your life.

I read a lot of books. Heck, I've even written a few myself. My hope is that the books I write have the kind of meaningful, positive impact on people that this book has had on me, and that I'm confident it will have on you.

Welcome to the jungle.

Joe Calloway, author of *Becoming a Category of One—How Extraordinary Companies Transcend Commodity and Defy Comparison* and *Be the Best at what Matters Most: The Only Strategy You Will Ever Need*

Preface

I'm 30,000 feet in the air on a flight to Charlotte, North Carolina, to work with one of the top 50 builders in the United States—the second of the top 100 that my firm has landed in the past two years. I always carry a good book with me wherever I travel; for this trip, I've decided to reread Tim Ferris's famed *The 4-Hour Workweek* for the fifth time. I think the concept of *Lifestyle Design* is about to sink in as his book has forced me to not only look at the drivers of the business Models I evaluate but also the actual vehicles people use to advance their strategy. I'm starting to understand that sometimes it's not the vehicle's driver that poses the major problem in getting from point A to point B; rather it's the *actual vehicle* the 'driver is using to get there. It's important to look at both the strategy and the people as they relate to growth, and many times it takes a fresh perspective and someone who specializes in finding and filling the missing structures companies have to take complicated growth and make it simple and engaging.

I've been working as a coach and thought Leader to small entrepreneurial firms and multibillion-dollar companies over the past several years. During this time, I've

witnessed a constant problem that keeps people from breaking through their own ceilings of success—a problem that stems from two places: their Model (or lack of one) and their people. Even if they do have the right Model, there’s often a substantial gap between what their people know they’re *supposed* to do and what they *actually* do. People nowadays seem to be more confused than ever; they’re living in chaotic environments with little or no direction on how to achieve growth. In short, they don’t know where to go or what to do. This is the infamous and oft-cited “execution gap.” And it’s also the reason they need someone who specializes in activating their potential.

Every single one of us has likely heard at one point or another that we’ve got more potential in the tank. But since no one really knows how to squeeze it out of their people in a systematic and coordinated way, growth tends to be random and sporadic, resulting in false starts, good intentions, and mediocre results.

That’s where I come in. I know how to get the potential out of the people—and it begins with taking complicated growth and then making it simple and easy to understand. It also has to do with focusing the group’s energy on some dominant aspiration, and building something people can emotionally sink their teeth into and get involved in. This is where the *Zebras and Cheetahs Model* comes into play.

Over the years, I’ve found that many of the Models that organizations are currently using simply don’t work. As a former championship coach turned entrepreneur

and business builder, I've developed a system that has served multiple disciplines in athletics, financial services, real estate, insurance, and even prison rehabilitation, producing growth of up to 45 percent in a one-year cycle by adding the Model we write about in this book and a coach who engages people in a set of consistent and systematic behaviors that allows them to do something tomorrow they simply cannot do today. Many of the Models I've seen in companies simply aren't sufficient to become the vehicle that drives new performance; and sometimes organizations just have the wrong players on the team to execute the Model. This is why I begin work with *any* company that wants me to drive a dominant focus by asking them to answer three questions before we dive in:

1. **Do we have the right players on this team?** No amount of coaching can take bad players to new levels—especially if they are unenlightened people who have no desire to make a gut-level decision to *go*.
2. **Do these right players genuinely desire to play at a new level?** Are they hungry, humble, and teachable—or will we spend all of our time trying to convince them they can be better? Will they make a shift in their activity to drive new results (because new results always require new behavior)? You won't see things change if everyone keeps doing all the same stuff they've been doing before.

3. **Do the right players have the capacity to play at a different level?** In other words: Do they possess the knowledge, skills, desire, and confidence to make the important shift they need to remain viable in a changing market? There's nothing worse than having people who either don't want to or can't make this shift on a team whose Leader is tired of subsidizing mediocrity. Sometimes good people just don't have the capacity to do more than they are currently doing. This doesn't mean they're not good people. But we need good people who have the capacity—that is, the ability and the desire—to play at new levels.

Leaving any of the above questions unanswered will likely mean you'll remain stuck and frustrated in a place where too many underachievers live.

I began to understand the importance of having the right Model after spending a decade of my life as a head women's basketball coach. During my 12 years in this field, I turned around a dormant culture with nothing but apathy present and a few minimal signs of life here and there. I eventually learned that the only way to make something important to others is do something so big that people have no choice but to pay attention and take notice. *Life is just too short to think small or become something mediocre.*

During my decade of winning championships and transforming this culture, I began to truly understand that everyone has a ceiling. I also came to appreciate

that coaches are the only way that we can break through those ceilings and activate our real potential. Anyone who's ever had a great coach in their life understands that great coaches do three things:

1. They make us **have conversations** we don't want to have.
2. They make us **do things** we may not want to do.
3. They help us **become something** we didn't even think we could become.

Without others' help, all we have is our own ego to convince us that we can make the jump from where we are to where we want to go, and this rarely happens. There are certain gaps or "missing structures" that coaches are trained to recognize and fill to help advance the strategy of the team. As long as these gaps are present the team has underrealized potential and consistently underperforms. One consistent gap is a lack of a clear growth Model that engages every single person toward a dominant aspiration and harnesses the total energy of the group in a coordinated and systematic manner.

This book can become the hammer and nails that you and your group have been looking for to make this shift in your lives and organization. The *Zebras and Cheetahs Model* is predicated on unique experiences of blending coaching acumen with entrepreneurial thinking and using athletic Models to drive business performance and business Models to drive athletic performance. In essence, I've learned how to become a Cheetah and run

faster. I've also learned how to become a Zebra and look different from other corporate business folks that one day woke up and arbitrarily decided to label themselves "coach." I am a coach at my core, thanks to the combination of unique experiences and blend of education that's afforded me a differential advantage: the ability to move people through a Model with focus and execution toward a dominant aspiration. You won't hear me use the word goals in this book, as I believe it is the most overused and underdone word in America. People don't reach goals; they lower them. People reach a *dominant focus*, a single rallying cry that drives their own and their group's energy with a laser-like focus and a clarity that achieves greatness. If you don't have one now, you will before you are through reading this book. It's a necessity if you want to thrive in the concrete jungle of the business world.

The Model has helped grow a 2.2 billion-dollar bank by 43 percent in a retail initiative that built 10,000 new customers in the worst economy we've seen in many years. It has also helped to grow a mortgage division by over a million dollars in profit in one calendar year, drive 420 home sales in the worst housing market to date for a home builder, and increase a real estate firm's closings from 120 to 175, making the firm over \$400,000 in additional revenue in a one-year cycle.

The lessons this book offers are not only about coaching. They're also about perspective and mindset—which is where Colby Jubenville comes into the equation. As a former coach himself, Colby's

perspective and my focus combine to rework your entire outlook—from the way you think, to the way you respond, to the way you experience intentional breakthroughs. Never before have a coach and a strategist come together to form the perfect blend of unique perspective and uncommon focus and execution and achieve such a powerful combination. You can't own a position in the market until you pick one, and Colby is better at helping people find and articulate their position than anyone I've ever known. His unique perspective will launch you on a journey toward differentiation by showing you how to own a space that is suited perfectly for you. You'll need a clear advantage and strategy to survive in the concrete jungle, and Colby provides it.

This book will also explain exactly how to move toward the aforementioned *dominant focus* in your life or business. You'll learn to embrace a new way of thinking that makes you look different, run faster, and stay agile. This Model is a clear way to separate yourself from those around you—to do something that other people seek to replicate.

If there's one thing I could emphasize above all else, it is simply: enjoy the journey. It will change your life and the life of your organization, *if* you're open to what it can offer. One of my favorite spiritual sayings is, "Be open to anything and closed off to nothing." This is where learning and growth start—and where breakthroughs happen.

Coach Micheal J. Burt

Unique Perspective, Then Mindset

I've never met Marshall Mathers (more commonly known by his stage name, Eminem) and I probably never will. But he knows about the concrete jungle in which he lives and has made his fortune rapping about his unique perspective. He sees the world differently than most people do, and consequently he has created a shift in mindset about an entire genre of music. In the song *Love the Way You Lie*, he states, "I can't tell you what it is; I can only tell you what it *feels like*." In his music as each verse unfolds, it's the *feeling* or *emotion* tied to struggle that lets the listener know who he is, what he does, and why he matters.

This got me thinking about where unique perspective comes from, and prompted me to ask the question: How does someone *truly* change their mindset?

One place where a unique perspective originates—at least in my life—has been struggle. Facing hardships has taught me how to become open, humble, and teachable by whatever adversity had to teach me. However, I've found that it's becoming increasingly harder to find opportunities like these anymore. Life in the twenty-first century doesn't really encourage us to embrace, listen to, and learn lessons from struggle. We very rarely take the time to stop and ask, "What is this experience trying to teach me"? Instead, we run toward some finish line that doesn't really exist.

Organizations approach struggle the same way individuals do. Instead of asking the hard questions, we

simply accept current circumstances as though we have no control over them, and we tend to blame others for putting us there. Some might find themselves in a life, organization, or job surrounded by a group of people to whom they feel disconnected and wonder how they got there.

But for a select few, a different story unfolds, one whose script comes from their individual experiences and results in a unique perspective. This unique perspective came to me through a few different social intuitions including music and school; however, there was one in particular that I feel provides opportunities for people to struggle, explore, and excel—sports. The games I played with my friends as a child tested my skills and abilities in different ways. They prompted us to create teams of people, all with unique abilities who enjoyed new opportunities to compete every time we played.

I continued to participate in sports through college. Athletics granted me opportunities to learn, grow in responsibility, contribute to a group, and receive recognition. It involved more than simply competing against others and myself; it gave me a chance to gain unique experience. Those moments defined the relationships I made, the people with whom I connected, and the lessons I learned. Eventually, my focus shifted away from the playing field and into the classroom and a unique education. During my graduate work, I began to see how, like a sports team, a classroom had a Leader and a group of followers, all of whom possessed unique skills. Each person did something well, and it was the Leader's job to

figure out what that was and how best to put it to use. And the Leaders that managed to do this most effectively were some of the first Zebras and Cheetahs Leaders that I encountered.

Seeing the Big Picture

Zebras and Cheetahs Leaders are indeed special because of their perspective. They see the big picture in its entirety, and they help others see the whole and all its related parts. Consider your own situation. What related parts comprise you, and how are they connected to things around you? One way to discern this is to answer the three big picture questions that I asked myself:

1. Who am I?
2. What am I going to do?
3. Why do I matter to the world?

The answers won't be easy to come by, but they *will* help create some focus, clarity, and direction. They'll allow you to connect the big picture to both the personal and professional elements of who you are.

Tapping into Intensity: Harnessing Your Whole Self

Zebras and Cheetahs Leaders know how to tap into their own intensity to harness the whole self. Of course, this no easy feat; it requires facing yourself, your success, and your failures truthfully, and determining exactly what

you're willing to do. Many people go their entire lives without asking these questions, and then they wonder why they ended up where they did. But when you push past your comfort zone, you begin to experience personal and professional breakthroughs—growth you will be able to see, harness, and control. You'll gain a new sense of confidence about your place in the world.

Connecting with the Core

Zebras and Cheetahs Leaders not only understand how to connect to their core; they also know how to help others do the same. This core is each person's unique value—what gives you and others drive and purpose.

The first time I heard Coach Burt speak, I knew that he had connected to his core. He spoke about many topics, but I found myself focusing on and writing down four words: *voice*, *leadership*, *execution*, and *culture*. Those core values are the center of what Micheal Burt does, and the legacy that has been created at www.coachburt.com. Identifying these values early in our relationship has allowed us to keep our focus where it needs to be, and it continues to serve as the core from which we work.

Where Do We Go Now?

In the Guns N' Roses song "Sweet Child of Mine" (which has always been a personal favorite), lead singer Axel Rose sings in the chorus, "Where do we go now?" Every time I hear that I can't help but think, that's what

everyone wants to know. There's not a person alive who doesn't ask this question, and it's up to the Zebras and Cheetahs Leader to help others figure that out. And, as stated before, they do so by using their unique perspective and experience to figure out what others need, want, can do, and recognize them for their contribution.

My perspective is different from yours, and from that of the next person and the next person. These individual outlooks are what allow us all to share our distinctive experiences and figure out what use they can be to others. Every single one of us has shared some defining moments with incredible people—and along with them teachable moments that bring meaning, purpose, and value in our lives.

And that is essentially why I co-authored this book. Coach Burt and I want to share stories with you that have been with both of us throughout our entire lives. To me, the uniqueness of this book lies in telling this story, one built around something called *collective passion*. It's about the challenges we face as people and as groups and how we connect every day with people, places, and ideas—together. Part stories, part passion, part practice—and all real. It's the struggles that I've already emphasized that are so crucial to our growth. The passion will focus on some of the people and ideas that can significantly shape your thinking; and the practice will come to life through the rituals and routines that bring all of this to life, every day.

My story and life experiences have made me who I am—as yours have likely done for you. They've allowed