

“Our future, the world’s future, depends on attracting better leaders to government. *Leadocracy* provides a blueprint for how to do it.

Reading it is an inspiration.”

—Governor John W. Hickenlooper of Colorado

# LEADOCRACY

GEOFF SMART

COAUTHOR OF THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER *WHO*

## PRAISE FOR *LEADOCRACY*

### Entrepreneurs

“*Leadocracy* is a refreshingly simply solution to the problem of government dysfunction.” —H. Wayne Huizenga, Chairman, Huizenga Holdings and former Founder and CEO of three Fortune 500 companies

“At a time of deep doubt about the ability of our federal government to manage our country, *Leadocracy* provides a reason for hope. As Geoff Smart demonstrates in this timely book, with great leadership no problem is unsolvable.” —Ken Griffin, CEO of Citadel

“As someone who has seen up close hundreds of companies succeed or fail, I can tell you that the quality of the leader is the number one driver of success. *Leadocracy* shows how to get more great leaders into government, which we sorely need.” —Steve Schwarzman, Chairman, CEO, and Cofounder, The Blackstone Group

“If we don’t have leadership in this country with the experience to develop a smart long-term economic growth plan, the guts to aggressively execute it, and the perseverance to stick with it over the long haul, we’ll never again see the economic prosperity we’ve come to take for granted.” —Ted Waitt, Chairman, Avalon Capital Group and Waitt Family Foundation, Founder & former CEO of Gateway

“Leadership is the key to human progress. Geoff Smart’s book leads the way.” —Charles Butt, Chairman, H-E-B

“If we can systematically find ways to attract our best leaders to government, as *Leadocracy* describes, the quality of life of our society will improve.” —John Malone, Ph.D., Chairman, Liberty Media Corporation

### Government Leaders

“Our future, the world’s future, depends on attracting better leaders to government. *Leadocracy* provides a blueprint for how to do it. Reading it is an inspiration.” —Governor John W. Hickenlooper of Colorado

“*Leadocracy* documents what we in Indiana have learned firsthand: With leadership from citizens possessing the right mix of experience and vision, good government is not a lost cause.” —Governor Mitch Daniels of Indiana

“Geoff Smart makes clear the compelling need for top talent to choose public service. *Leadocracy* demonstrates the difference strong leadership makes in the public and private sectors.” —Governor Jack Markell of Delaware

“Private sector leadership is badly needed in the public sector. *Leadocracy* shows us how to make this happen.” —Mark Emkes, Commissioner of Finance & Administration, State of Tennessee, and former CEO of Bridgestone Americas

“It is high time that we focus far more on improving the return on investment of our tax dollars. The best approach for accomplishing this is for successful business leaders to step forward and give back by applying their wealth of practical business experience and objective fact-based analysis to government leadership and decision making.” —Fred Steingraber, President of Kenilworth, IL, and Chairman Emeritus, A.T. Kearney

“Nothing we do in government is as important as who we hire into key leadership roles. *Leadocracy*, and Geoff’s previous book *Who*, outline principles that we have applied with great success here in Colorado.” —Roxane White, Chief of Staff to Governor John Hickenlooper of Colorado

“What a ‘Smart’ book! *Leadocracy* redefines government leadership and what it should be, results-based and focused on why true leaders choose to work in government—to help better the lives of others in a streamlined, efficient, and accountable manner.” —Lynn Johnson, Executive Director, Jefferson County, CO, Department of Human Services

“I was in business, then served as Mayor of Warrenton, Virginia where we improved government services, slashed taxes 75 percent, and led the country with our Green Initiative. *Leadocracy* is not fiction, it is real!” —George Fitch, former Mayor of Warrenton, VA

“The problems of government are not insurmountable, if the right leaders are in charge. *Leadocracy* is our way forward.” —Mayor Charles Harris of York, NE

### **Social Entrepreneurs**

“Education reform and government reform are inter-related. I believe that leadership is the answer to both. I applaud Geoff Smart’s initiative and willingness to bring his hiring methods into the public sector with *Leadocracy*.” —Wendy Kopp, Founder, Teach For America

“Looking for a silver bullet solution to the world’s problems? It isn’t money, technology, or a magical pill. I’m with Geoff; it’s leadership.” —Nancy Lublin, CEO and Chief Old Person, dosomething.org

“As *Leadocracy* points out, whether you are in the social or private sector, leadership is about releasing the energy in others.” —Robin Wise, President & CEO, Junior Achievement–Rocky Mountain

“We have used Geoff Smart’s methods for hiring here at KIPP with great results. We would love to see them applied to how government leaders are selected, the way he outlines in *Who* and *Leadocracy*.” —Mike Feinberg and David Levin, Cofounders, KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program, the largest charter school operator in the United States)

### **Leading Scholars**

“A high-performing government requires high-performing leaders; *Leadocracy* convincingly shows that we have an under-tapped supply in the private sector and desperately need to engage them.” —Professor Steven Kaplan of The University of Chicago Booth School of Business

“I am encouraged by the idea of more great private sector leaders going into the public sector, a trend which *Leadocracy* outlines.” —Professor Morten Sorensen, Columbia Business School

“The evaluation of any organization starts with an assessment of the leader. Geoff Smart has made a compelling case for leader-oriented government reform in *Leadocracy*.” —Professor Stewart Donaldson, Dean & Chair of Psychology, Claremont Graduate University

“Part diagnosis, part call-to-arms, Geoff Smart’s *Leadocracy* injects a thought-provoking new voice into the dialogue about how to improve our government. It will hopefully spark better leaders to seek key positions at all levels of government.” —Professor Noam Wasserman, Harvard Business School, author of *The Founder’s Dilemmas: Anticipating and Avoiding the Pitfalls That Can Sink a Startup*

### **Bestselling Authors**

“Geoff Smart is the world expert on the topic of hiring leaders. What he suggests we do in *Leadocracy* to get more great leaders into government is wise counsel.” —Marshall Goldsmith, the world’s #1 Leadership Thinker (Thinkers50, *Harvard Business Review*) and *New York Times* bestselling author or editor of 31 books, including *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*

“Geoff Smart is one of the nation’s top thinkers on how to hire great people. And he has put his finger on our fundamental failure as voters—we don’t hire great people into government. *Leadocracy* shows how that can change.” —Atul Gawande, MD, surgeon and bestselling author of *The Checklist Manifesto*

### **CEOs**

“*Leadocracy* helps to demystify government, and shows how great leaders from the private sector can make a difference in the public sector, for the good of us all.” —Aaron Kennedy, Founder, Noodles & Company

“Geoff Smart’s previous book, *Who*, was the number one most impactful book on my career as a CEO. I am hopeful *Leadocracy* will be as impactful on society.”—Craig Zoberis, CEO, Fusion OEM

“It is about time this subject got the thoughtful treatment it deserves. The sad fact is our government is a source of competitive disadvantage for our country. The happy fact is Geoff’s book may start to change that.”—Kent Thiry, Chairman & CEO, DaVita

“I would LOVE to see more of Geoff Smart’s principles of hiring applied to how we choose our government leaders.”—Kevin Burns, Managing Principal, Lazard Technology Partners, and former CEO of InterSolv

“Geoff is an absolute wonder to work with, and even more so to experience! His brilliantly simple approach to the seemingly complex issues of leadership is second to none.”—Leslie Baum, Senior Director of Global Learning, Entrepreneurs’ Organization, and Director of EO’s Entrepreneurial Masters Program

“The world continues to grow in complexity while the democratic process we use to govern has become mired in bureaucracy and increasingly ineffective. *Leadocracy* offers a provocative new strategy to engage our strongest leaders, enabling government agencies to deliver more with less.”—Mark Hopkins, Managing Partner, Cresendo Capital Partners, Former CEO of Peak Industries, and author of *Shortcut to Prosperity*

“One of my main goals in business is to find and grow great leaders. Our success depends on it. Sadly, there is no such training ground in government. We should expect more from our politicians and *Leadocracy* makes a strong case for greater private participation in the public sector.”—Mike Fries, CEO, Liberty Global

“*Leadocracy* provides practical and thoughtful suggestions on how to attract great leaders into government.”—Mark T. Gallogly, Managing Principal and Cofounder, Centerbridge Partners

“Geoff Smart’s methods have helped me hire a great team. I can only imagine how much good will be done for society when this approach is applied to hiring government leaders.”—Scott Clawson, President, GSI

“Great leaders go through stages in their careers. *Leadocracy* makes a great case for why one of those stages should be a stint in government.”—Chrismon Nofsinger, Ph.D., CEO, The Nofsinger Group, and author of *The Shift From One to Many*

“Geoff Smart is ‘the man’ when it comes to hiring. I am pleased to see him applying his methods to the daunting task of selecting government leaders. *Leadocracy* is a step in the right direction.” —Darrin Anderson, RVP, HD Supply

“I loved my job in the private sector. I love my job in the public sector. People seem to think that government is only about gridlock and dysfunction. It’s not, as *Leadocracy* illustrates. Great leaders can make a huge difference, and they can have a fun and meaningful chapter of their career in government.” —Ken Lund, Executive Director, Office of Economic Development and International Trade, and former Managing Partner, HRO

“I used to say that I would never in a million years consider going into government. However, *Leadocracy* has changed my mind.” —Greg Alexander, CEO, Sales Benchmark Index, and author of *Making the Number*

“Geoff Smart’s approach to hiring was game changing for me as CEO, which allowed my team to deliver a 67 percent internal rate of return to our investors. I can only hope his expertise has the same kind of impact on the world of government leadership, which badly needs it.” —Panos Anas-tasiadis, former CEO of Cyveillance

“Finding a way to get more ethical and competent leaders in government is critical for the future of our way of life. *Leadocracy* applies Geoff Smart’s hiring method to the public sector, which badly needs it.” —Selim Bassoul, Chairman & CEO, Middleby Corporation

“*Leadocracy* is bound to be one of the most impactful books of our generation. Government desperately needs more great leaders. Great leaders need a sense of meaning and challenge in their careers. When the two come together, the game will change for the better.” —Eric Cohen, President, Power Plant Services

“I have limited time and choose the business books I read carefully. They must be logical but simple, compelling but fun, and above all direct us on how to make an impact. Once again Geoff has inspired me.” —Paul Ford, CEO, Total Attorneys

“*Leadocracy* signals a movement that is underway to hire more great leaders into government. I hope my fellow Brits figure this one out too; our way of life depends on it.” —Richard Bryan, Managing Director, BBH Properties

“Thousands of successful entrepreneurs around the world know about Geoff Smart’s ideas about leadership and performance, and they apply them with great success. In *Leadocracy*, I am pleased to see the world of government is starting to take note.” —Verne Harnish, Founder, Entrepreneurs’ Organization, and author of *Mastering the Rockefeller Habits*

“The sooner we put into practice the tools in *Leadocracy*, the sooner we can fix what is broken with our government.” —Rob Lindemann, CEO, Lindemann Chimney Co.

“Leadership is the root of all things good or evil in an organization. Government is no different, as *Leadocracy* shows.” —Craig Williams, CEO, CommunityLink Communications

“Talent guru Geoff Smart has hit the mark outlining why our best leaders shun politics, and why they are the panacea we need, and what we can do about it. Bravo!” —G. Michael Maddock, author, speaker, and Founder/CEO of Agency of Innovation, Maddock Douglas

“Geoff Smart finally answers the question, ‘Are great leaders born or made?’” —Blair Richardson, Managing Partner and Cofounder, Bow River Capital Partners

“*Leadocracy* has the potential to change the game of how government works; Geoff Smart is the right person to speak to the topic of picking leaders.” —Dan Hemphill, Founder & President of Hemphill Search Group

“Geoff Smart’s book *Who* gave us the key strategies and methods that helped us hire top talent. This has allowed us to create an award-winning culture and excel in our social mission. *Leadocracy* shows how to hire great leaders for the public sector.” —Scott Mesh, Ph.D., CEO, Los Niños Services

# LEADOCRACY

HIRING MORE GREAT LEADERS (LIKE YOU)  
INTO GOVERNMENT

GEOFF SMART

COAUTHOR OF THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER *WHO*



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This book is dedicated to my father, Brad Smart.  
Thanks, Pop, for the lively dinner-table debates  
about society's problems and solutions.

## INTRODUCTION

# Solving Our #1 Problem

“Life just gets better and better.”

Virgil Johnson was fond of this saying. He repeated it to his family again and again over the years. And when he said it, he said it with a smile. Because he meant it. It was true for him.

I remember the day that Dr. Johnson met my newborn son, Will, for the first time. Virgil was my wife’s grandfather. He smiled with pride, and held Will high up in the air and told him, “Life just gets better and better.” It didn’t mean much to our wide-eyed boy at the time, but it left an impression on me. Later that day, the old man passed away.

That was ten years ago, a time when terrorism was on the rise, countries were becoming unstable, government spending ran rampant, the economy was uncertain at best.

Since then, the situation has gotten worse.

When I heard the news of Virgil’s passing, a question crept into my mind. It was a question that I tried to ignore for years. But about eighteen months ago, I was forced to face it.

*Will life get better and better?*

I was not sure of the answer. Like many of you who are reading this book, I was cynical about the state of our country and about our leaders’ ability to improve it. And I wasn’t

alone in my opinions. In June 2011, Gallup polled adults from across the United States. Forty-eight percent of those polled indicated that they had very little or no confidence in the U.S. Congress. Of the sixteen institutions listed, including the criminal justice system, labor unions, banks, and HMOs, the U.S. Congress ranked lowest in confidence.<sup>1</sup> Only 12 percent of people said that they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in our Congress, and that number has been on a downward trend ever since 1973, when the poll was first taken.

But in December of 2010, I got an email that changed my life, and may change yours.

It was a request to help my state's newly elected governor, John Hickenlooper, select his cabinet. This email would start me off on an unexpected journey, an exploration of the realities of leadership in government.

What I discovered shocked me.

I began the journey expecting to find nothing but gridlock, corruption, and dysfunction in government. I was prepared to confirm my worst fear, that society as we know it is doomed.

During this journey, I got to see for myself what government was all about. I was able to talk candidly with, and in some cases work alongside, leaders who had taken the big leap from the private sector into government. Do you want to know what I found?

Society is not doomed after all.

Government, though highly dysfunctional today, is not a problem without a solution.

If you are rubbing your eyes in disbelief at what you just read, this book is for you. If you care about your own career happiness and your own life getting better and better, this

book is for you. If you care about the lives of your friends and family and their kids' lives getting better and better, this book is for you.

Thank you for joining me on this journey. If this book changes your mind, please help me spread the word. Give this book as a gift. Talk it up. Help to accelerate movement in the right direction to solve our number one problem.

## **Our #1 Problem**

What do we need in order to enjoy a life that gets better and better?

Freedom, of course, to identify our own goals—be they personal or professional—and achieve them. Safety and stability. Opportunities to pursue challenges and utilize our skills and talents to their highest and best use. These are the factors that lead to prosperity and happiness in a society.

Our quality of life is directly affected by these factors. But have we seen an upward trend in these areas over the years? No.

Why? It is because society functions only as well as its government functions.

Government is not working anymore.

Governments around the world continue to sink further into debt and dysfunction. Politicians and bureaucrats overpromise and underdeliver. They make decisions that lead to more conflict, more waste, and more pain for us all. Their actions create the kind of instability that makes it hard to find a job. Or keep a job.

There are talented leaders in government. I'm not saying there are no great leaders in government. I am saying that there are too few great leaders in government, and there are forces keeping our greatest leaders out of government.

We have a big problem. In fact, it's our number one problem:

*Our #1 problem is that government is on the wrong path,  
a path marked by a sign that reads:*

BUREAUCRACY
-------------

This path gets muddier and muddier as we go. The burdens and restrictions and waste get worse and worse down this path. If we stay on this path, I fear that one day our shoes will make a sucking sound of finality. We would grunt and strain, but then forward progress would stop. And that dream of life getting better and better? It would come to an end.

You may feel the same way. Three separate polls from Reuters, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal* over three months in 2011 found that more than 70 percent of Americans think the country is “on the wrong track.”<sup>2</sup> We have been talking about this as a society for decades.

Around the dinner table when I was growing up, my family and I often debated issues related to leadership, government, and freedom. One of the first books my father gave me was *Free to Choose*, which outlines Nobel Prize-winner Milton Friedman's philosophy of how free choice generally leads to better outcomes than the inevitable subpar outcomes produced by a bureaucracy.

Unfortunately, the challenges of fixing government today typically lie in the hands of bureaucratic non-leaders we have put in office. These are people who never had a chance to develop the skill of leadership. People who have not analyzed complex problems, allocated scarce resources to their highest and best uses, and aligned people to take coordinated action to achieve the group's goals. People who are not familiar with best practices of budgeting, hiring, strategic planning, continuous

improvement, lean management, process improvement, customer satisfaction, goal-setting, and accountability. These well-intended non-leaders tend to focus on *what's* wrong with government, and on what they need to do to get reelected or reappointed. Their solutions often include short-term answers, increasing restrictions and burdens for one segment of the citizenry or another, new laws designed to overcome the flaws of old laws, and complex regulations. They rely on bureaucracy, and do not have the gift of leadership talent.

Yet we as citizens have a bad habit of turning to these non-leaders again and again to solve our government's most complex leadership problems. It's like we are going to a dentist when we need heart surgery. It is like going to a concert offered by people who have never picked up an instrument prior to opening night. It is like boarding a plane and over-hearing one of the pilots say to the other, "Um, hmm, hey Pat, can you tell me again what all of these dials mean, and what these lever thingies do?" Talent matters! So why do we keep putting so many non-leaders into leadership offices?

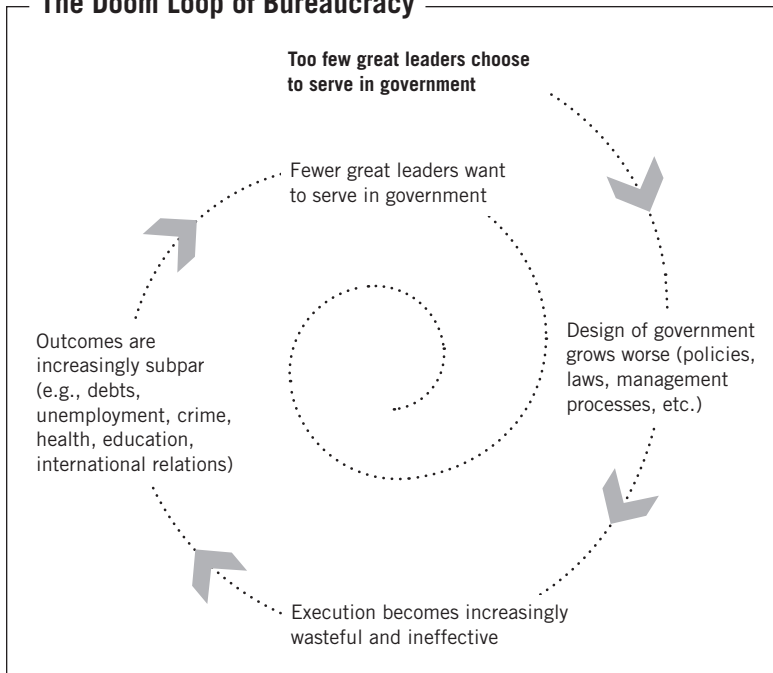
What keeps us on this bureaucracy path? One core thing. The absence of great leaders in government. And the more dysfunctional government becomes, the more it repels our greatest leaders from wanting to serve in it. It is the Doom Loop of Bureaucracy—the more bureaucratic government becomes, the more it repels the leaders we need to fix it.

But the problem of bureaucratic dysfunction can be solved. I have seen it solved many times—both in the private sector and now in the public sector. It starts by stepping off the path of bureaucracy and choosing a new path. This path is marked by a sign that says:

LEADOCRACY
------------



### The Doom Loop of Bureaucracy



### The Solution: Hiring More Great Leaders into Government

I have spent my entire professional life evaluating leaders. It's what I do. And I love this work.

I was born into the hands of an industrial psychologist. Well, the doctor actually did the delivery, but my father cut the cord. My father, Brad Smart, spent *his* career focused on the topic of selecting leaders, so he was my earliest and most profound mentor in this field. Leadership selection was the subject of my Ph.D. dissertation at Claremont, where I had the amazing opportunity of studying under the “Father of Management,” Peter Drucker. In my graduate-school

apartment in 1995, I founded a leadership consulting firm called ghSMART because I believed that the world would be a better place if organizations did a better job of putting the right *who* in the right *where* doing the right *what* to achieve their goals.

Over nearly two decades, my ghSMART colleagues and I have helped thousands of leaders in all types of organizations across the globe to identify and solve their biggest leadership problems. Problems like “How can I perform at my best as a leader?” Problems like “Who should I hire for this important leadership assignment?” Problems like “How can we transform this three-hundred-year-old struggling company into a high-performing culture that values accountability, innovation, and results?” Harvard University wrote a couple of case studies about our firm, which describe ghSMART as a pioneer in the growing field of leadership consulting. Today, these cases are taught in the classroom to all of Harvard’s nine hundred first-year MBAs. This means that I get to show up there once a year and face a grilling of biblical proportions about all of the mistakes I have made as an entrepreneur. But it is fun, and a valuable learning experience hearing your firm’s past performance and future strategy debated by some brilliant young minds.

Hiring leaders is the subject of my previous book, *Who: The A Method for Hiring*, which I coauthored with my friend and colleague Randy Street. We are so proud that the ideas in *Who* have made an impact on so many leaders’ lives. *Who* became a *New York Times* bestseller in the United States and won several international awards, including being named the number one best business book of the year by Canada’s *Globe & Mail* newspaper.

For someone who truly appreciates great leadership when

he sees it, it is painful to watch non-leaders in government messing things up for the rest of us. These are people who are not evil. And I am not mad at them. But many of them have no business being in the positions they occupy.

What I have learned over the years is that great leaders do a better job of analyzing what is needed, carefully allocating scarce resources to their highest and best use with minimal waste, and aligning people to achieve the goals that improve everyone's quality of life. So getting more of them into government might end up being the core solution to society's number one problem: broken government.

In fact, I believe we can sum up that solution with six words:

*Hiring more great leaders into government.*

You may find this solution obvious. I agree. It is obvious. And it became even more obvious to me the farther I have gone in this journey. This thought crystallized while I was working with Governor Hickenlooper and his dynamic chief of staff, Roxane White. From that point, I spent months testing this solution by chasing down and interviewing some of the great leaders who have actually made the leap into government. I wanted to hear what government was really like. What I discovered was a movement that was already underway. There is already a flow of great leaders from the private sector into the government sector. So I did not start this movement. I am simply giving it a name. And through this book, I am encouraging you to spread the word, so we can amplify this movement—the leadocracy movement.

*Leadocracy* means “government by society's greatest leaders.”

The solution  
to our number  
one problem:  
hiring  
more great  
leaders into  
government.

It is based on the idea that **government is only as good as *who* is in it.**

A society that fields its best leaders into government leadership positions will perform better than a society that does not.

Leadocracy is not a call for a new form of government. Leadocracy is simply the next step in improving the grand experiment known as democracy. Leadocracy is the same form of democracy, or “constitutional republic,” that we have in the United States. I like that our citizens freely elect our leaders, and that anybody could become president regardless of race, creed, or family name. Let’s keep that. And I like the checks and balances of power, intended to reduce the chance of corruption and tyranny. Let’s keep that, too.

The only change that leadocracy suggests to our current model of government is inserting more great leaders into government. Government is not just a collection of laws. *Who* is governing is just as important as the system in which they are governing.

What are the alternative forms of government? Aristocracy? Monarchy (government by birthright)? No, those models are based on entitlement, not talent. Anarchy? Nope, I don’t want to live in an anarchy; that is too messy and scary. What about a society governed by “philosopher kings” as Plato suggests in *The Republic*? No, thank you. We do not need more philosophers in government. We need more great leaders.

There are great leaders in our country, people you will hear about throughout the book, who have already made the leap from the private sector into government. And I think when you learn what they are accomplishing, you’ll be uplifted and inspired, just as I have been.

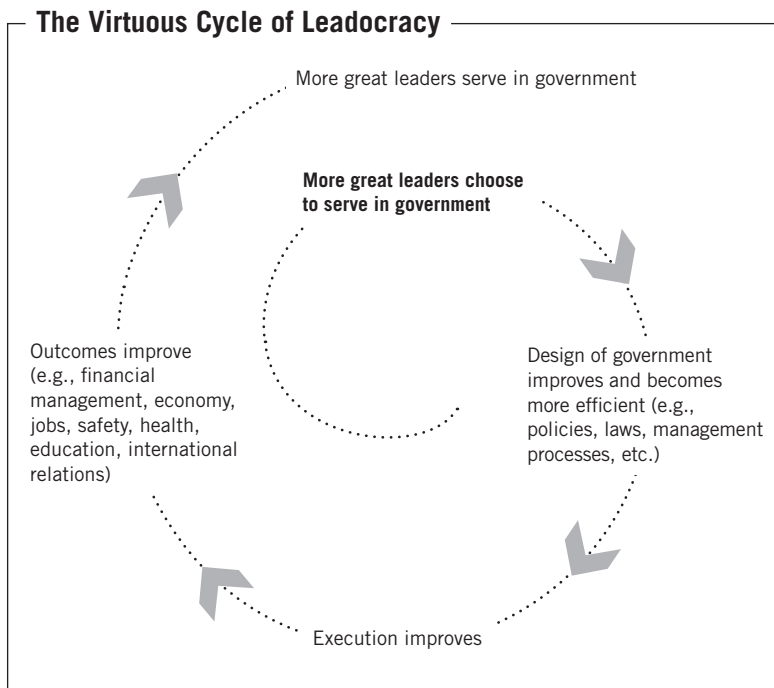
Here's the really crazy thing. We have plenty of amazing leaders in society!

I know that great leaders are out there—I've talked to thousands of them! I also know that without the right leadership, most problems go unsolved or get worse. With great leadership, no problem is unsolvable.

Unfortunately, today too few great leaders want to go into government. In a review of the database of CEOs at my firm, ghSMART, a University of Chicago research team led by entrepreneurship professor Steven Kaplan found that only 2 percent of CEOs expressed an interest in going into government during their careers. Only 2 percent! Yikes. The idea of government is so unsavory, it turns off most of our very best leaders. Some of the leaders I talked to actually laughed at me when I asked them if they would ever consider a role in government. As government gets even more dysfunctional, it repels our greatest leaders from ever wanting to serve. But if we can prime the pump and get more great leaders into government, we will be able to reverse the Doom Loop of Bureaucracy. We can begin gaining momentum with the Virtuous Cycle of Leadocracy.

Mostly, leadocracy is a call to action. To select government leaders more intelligently. To encourage the great leaders you know to apply their talents in the public sector at some point during their careers. To urge society's greatest leaders to consider taking a leadership adventure by doing a stint in public service at some point in their careers.

The purpose of this book is to help get us out of the dysfunctional Doom Loop of Bureaucracy and to amplify the Virtuous Cycle of Leadocracy that is already underway.



## Outline

What I found when I first got to go “behind the scenes” in government shocked me. I’ll tell you about that experience in chapter 1.

Fearing that my experience as leadership advisor to Governor Hickenlooper and Chief of Staff Roxane White was an anomaly, I asked them to connect me with other private sector leaders who had made the leap into government. They did. So I got to talk candidly with top government leaders in other geographies—leaders like Governors Mitch Daniels of Indiana and Jack Markell of Delaware. Heck, I even called up

the top positive psychology researcher in the world, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, to ask him whether he thought that private sector leaders might experience more career satisfaction doing a stint in government, or whether this assumption was foolish to even suggest. What he told me actually gave me the chills.

In talking with all of these interesting, “in the know” people, the goal was to answer three burning questions:

1. Is government too broken, or can great leaders actually make a difference?
2. What are the obstacles preventing more great leaders from going into government, and how might we remove them?
3. For the leaders who make the leap into government, do they regret it? Or did they find the experience worth it?

Around the time I was unexpectedly thrust into this world of government, I had already begun working on a new book project on business leadership, called *The Ideal Leader*, with my ghSMART colleagues Randy Street and Alan Foster. We are redefining what great leadership in the private sector means. We call the essence of leadership the “3 As of Leadership”—analyzing, allocating, and aligning. Rather than make you wait a few years for that book’s release, I’ll give you a preview of this framework as it applies to leadership in government in chapter 2.

Of course, the first hurdle I considered when I thought about getting more great leaders into government was the question of where they would come from. In chapter 3, I’ll talk about the fact that we have a vast resource of talented, experienced leaders in the private sector of our country, and



that we've already seen private sector leaders do great things in government leadership positions.

Identifying great leaders is one thing. Getting them to serve is something entirely different. When I talked to leaders whom I thought could make improvements in government, most of them said they wouldn't do it. In chapter 4, I'll share the most common obstacles they said made them avoid government. I'll then reveal stories from leaders in government that will help you sort myth from reality. In chapter 5, we'll hear what the benefits are to the individual leader of serving in government. I'll show that it's linked to this concept of "flow," the essence of happiness at work according to renowned psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

In chapter 6, I'll offer some simple tools you can use to spot great leaders and elect them. I'll introduce the Leadocracy Scorecard, which is like a checklist that you can use to evaluate candidates to decide who deserves your vote.

In chapter 7, I'll tell you about what I'm doing to try to advance the leadocracy movement. It's not the only solution. In fact, if this became the only organization supporting leadocracy, I would be disappointed. But it's my "putting my money where my mouth is"—100 percent of my author royalties from this book are being donated to this not-for-profit organization. It is called The Leaders Initiative. It is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is "to elevate humanity by identifying, developing, and deploying society's greatest leaders into government." That sounds lofty, and it is, but we are off to a good start. It's just one way to get the Virtuous Cycle of Leadocracy spinning faster and harder for all of our benefit. The Leaders Initiative is kind of like Teach for America, but rather than putting twenty-one-year-olds into low-income schools for

two-year teaching stints, we put highly accomplished private sector leaders into two-year government leadership stints. I've already signed the Leadocracy Pledge—to do a two-year full-time leadership job myself in government by my seventieth birthday (see page 143). I hope you will, too, and to encourage the best private sector leaders you know to do so.

Finally, in chapter 8, I'll share more stories of the real-world achievements that great private sector leaders have made in government, to attempt to persuade you that leadocracy isn't a pipe dream. These individuals are already creating communities that are safer, that are more financially stable and designed for economic growth, and that provide greater quality of life for citizens.

The leadocracy movement is underway. I hope that when you finish this book, you'll tell everybody you know to read it and contribute to the most important movement of our generation.

• • •

I believe that leadership is the ultimate lever for good in the world.

I believe that great leaders elevate humanity. I've met people who believe the same and are acting on those beliefs. People who are steering their communities onto the path of leadocracy.

The leadocracy movement has the potential to become like the Space Race of the second half of the last century. Consider the parallels. Each is a difficult but not impossible challenge that is worth doing. We flew a person to the moon and back in the 1960s! That was an incredible feat.

But this time, rather than competing for supremacy in space, perhaps nations will consider competing for the greatest number of talented leaders serving in government. And a rising tide of leadership competence in government will raise all boats. The leadocracy movement is more important than the Space Race. It's more important than reducing the national debt. It's more important than global trade, the environment, and world health.

Leadocracy is *how* all of these problems will be solved most effectively. Bureaucracy will not get us there. Leadocracy will.

How do we make it happen? That is what this book is all about. It is a great pleasure and privilege to share my discoveries along this journey with you.

Once we start hiring more great leaders into government, life will just get better and better. Yours. Mine. All of ours.

## CHAPTER 1

# Who, Not What

*Laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened . . . institutions must advance also, and keep pace with the times.*

*—Thomas Jefferson<sup>3</sup>*

On a cold day in December of 2010, I received the following email from a client:

*Geoff,*

*As you might be aware, I am on the governor-elect's transition team. Various lawyers and professionals are donating hundreds of hours. Would your firm be prepared to interview two to three of the top candidates for various cabinet positions? We would need this done in the next couple of weeks, as they are making the announcements by year-end. Roxane White, chief of staff, would like to call you.*

*Thanks in advance. The People of Colorado appreciate your support.*

*Blair Richardson*

My initial reaction was, “No way!”

Various thoughts crossed my mind. *Help the government? Government is hopeless and broken. What’s the point? We’re on a path to inevitable doom. Eventually, if it gets bad enough, I’ll have to move my family to Australia or somewhere.*

*Any help I offer to the new governor would be pointless. All of his leadership hiring decisions will be politically motivated anyway.*

*The next couple of weeks? It’s December 13! I was planning on coasting into the New Year and eating myself into a pleasant holiday stupor, maybe doing some shopping with the family. Bad timing. Too bad, so sad.*

*I’m going to say no.*

That’s what I thought. I started writing back with my regrets. “I’m sorry, but—”

My fingers froze on the keyboard.

A thought had popped into my head. Blair is somebody for whom I have the utmost respect. He radiates success—kind, polite, and never too busy to forget to put a tri-fold pocket square in his blazer. He’s smart, has delivered impressive results as a global business leader, has a great family, and so on. *If he is helping, maybe the situation isn’t hopeless*, I thought. Besides, *Time* magazine had called the new governor, John Hickenlooper, one of the “Five Best Big-City Mayors” in his previous job as mayor of Denver, and he had been a business leader and entrepreneur before that. I realized that I wouldn’t mind meeting him. In fact, it was a rare opportunity to meet a fellow businessperson who had gone into public service. I was curious what it was like. And I was interested in meeting our new governor, to see what he was all about. I had voted for him, after all.

I deleted the words I had written, and wrote this instead:

*Yes.*

*I voted for Hickenlooper, and am happy to use my firm's expertise to help him pick a great cabinet. His success as our governor will be largely determined by the quality of the team he selects. Privileged to serve.*

The work I was about to do for the governor ended up being the most exciting, meaningful, and fun work I did all year. And I can point to it as the moment that put me on the path to a very different mind-set about government and how to improve it.

## **A Journey Begins**

Four days after I sent the reply, I found myself at a small round conference table with John Hickenlooper, the newly elected governor of my home state of Colorado, and his chief of staff, Roxane White. Our task was to discuss whom to hire for key cabinet roles. The governor was to take office in three weeks.

In person, Governor Hickenlooper looked like the brew pub owner that he once was—energetic, friendly, and genuine. A mop of semi-combed hair flopped around cheerfully as he spoke. But I noticed an intensity of purpose behind his eyes, which let me know that we had important business to attend to today. And Roxane White—I was not sure what to expect from this former not-for-profit CEO and social-services director. Was she going to be a bleeding heart? I had heard that she was tough as nails. Was she going to be that in a good way, or a pain to work with? What I found was a woman who matched the governor on energy, but managed to steer hers, and his, into lanes of highly productive decision making.

Instantly, I could see why they made a great pair in their previous jobs as mayor of Denver and mayoral chief of staff.

Would this be a formal and stilted conversation? I had wondered how this governor would respond to my business-oriented approach to leadership selection. I was expecting this to be a waste of his time and mine. Any moment, I would hear the words or see the actions that would confirm my assumption that all government was dysfunctional beyond any hope of repair. But I was in for a surprise.

While the mood was serious, it was also refreshingly upbeat and practical. Governor Hickenlooper was engaged and clearly determined to make the best possible leadership decisions for key roles in his cabinet. The discussion about candidates was focused, fact-based, and lively. We focused on one key role at a time. What was the mission for the role? Key outcomes to achieve? Competencies that matter in that role? What about the slate of candidates? What are their backgrounds? To what extent do we have data to suggest how strong or weak they are on our scorecard checklist areas? What remaining questions need to be addressed before the in-depth interview?

The chief of staff had a refreshing can-do attitude in the face of this daunting challenge. Once we covered a topic thoroughly, we shifted seamlessly to the next topic of importance. *These people are as sharp as any of my CEO or private-equity clients. This is going really well. Oh my gosh, I admitted to myself, I am actually having fun.*

The governor's leadership competence began to chip away at my negative assumptions. First, he was clearly more interested in hiring the best leader than in playing politics. He didn't make any references to political party during these discussions.

Not once. Let me repeat that: We spent hours discussing key hires for cabinet roles. Not one time did the governor say the word *Republican* or *Democrat*. That was mind-blowing to me; I assumed that every elected leader cared mostly about the politics surrounding appointment decisions.

Second, he had his eye on results. What were we trying to achieve in human services, by when? How much would that cost? It was a very straightforward discussion of outcomes and strategies, not too different from thousands of conversations I have had with leaders in the private sector. Then he really surprised me and started talking about customers.

When I heard the governor refer to citizens as “customers,” I almost fell out of my swivel chair. Our citizens are our customers. We are here because they put us here. How do we take their tax revenue and invest it as wisely as possible? How do we manage those investments of time and money as intelligently as possible to deliver the best results?

I was shocked. And the second thing that I felt was a sense of relief. *Maybe the situation in government is not hopeless*, I thought.

All was going well, but then something happened.

Flipping through some of the résumés for one cabinet position, I began to feel disheartened. The job we were discussing was a big one. It required managing a multibillion-dollar business unit, or department, in the government. Thousands of employees. Weak performance outcomes. It was a big leadership responsibility to turn this organization around. “There are a few impressive candidates in the stack, but too few,” I said. “Where’s the A list?” I asked with my palms open, hoping not to insult anybody. I then added, with a smile on my face to bring some levity to my question, “Do you have some secret



drawer somewhere where you keep all the great résumés? You know, people who have actually managed a \$3 billion P&L before, and have led thousands of employees successfully?”

The governor and his chief of staff cried out, almost in unison, “We can’t get enough of the kind of leaders you are talking about. They won’t come!”

The governor continued, “I would love nothing better than to hire the very best leaders we have in our state. But they have a perception that government is unsavory, so they won’t come.”

Before I could stop myself, I blurted out, “*Isn’t* government unsavory?” My face got red as I realized how insulting it sounded.

The governor was not fazed by my question. “It doesn’t have to be,” Governor Hickenlooper replied with a small smile.

“In our administration, we’re going to be all about talent and results. We are going to make government the 3 Es—more elegant, effective, and efficient. So it will be a lot less unsavory for my key leaders here than in an administration that was all about politics. In the right situation, a cabinet job like this can actually be incredibly rewarding and meaningful for a leader.”

So all government roles are not unsavory. OK. Hmm. Maybe more leaders would go into government if we let them know that this is true. But right now, we clearly have an absence of great leaders.

*That’s why government is so messed up*, I thought.

I asked, “So what if you *could* get all the great leaders you want? Let’s say I backed a school bus up to your door right there, and it was filled with the state’s greatest leaders, eager to accept positions in your administration?”

The governor quickly replied, “Well, you would have a

government that performed much, much better. There is no question about that. The change would be profound.”

That is when it really clicked. Yes, government is broken; everyone knows that. Our attempts to fix it have been focused on chasing *what* solutions—new laws, regulations, fiddling with policies, arguing about ideology. But what if the fundamental problem were not a what problem? What if the fundamental problem were a *who* problem?

What if the fundamental problem was simply that we did not have enough great leaders in government? *Then it would make sense for us to stop chasing the what, and solve the who*, I thought. That point is in the last sentence of *Who*, the book I coauthored. It was echoing in my head as I sat there.

Stop chasing the what. Solve the who.

I looked at the governor and his chief of staff and, choosing my words carefully as I counted out six fingers, I said, “Hiring. More. Great. Leaders. Into. Government. There is a six-word solution to the problem of how to reform government. I shrugged my shoulders to invite honest feedback. “Right?”

Five seconds of silence.

Then the governor replied, “Yes.”

That December day, in that room with the governor, something told me that this solution did not apply just to our state but also could apply to all governments everywhere. Getting more great leaders into government could improve the quality of life of people around the world. OK, that might be a fundamental solution. But how to make that happen? “Someone should develop a program to get those leaders in office,” I said. “You could just go get them. You could demystify government for them. You could train them. Then they do a stint. You

could begin at the state level. And if it worked, the idea could spread to other states, and then to the federal and local levels, and then to other countries.”

“Like Teach for America,” Chief of Staff White added.

“They could do a stint for a couple of years,” said the governor, “and if they want to stay in it, they could; or they could then roll off back into the private sector. It’s not like they would have to spend the rest of their career in government.”

Silence. Exchange of looks. We were playing a game of “who’s going to step up?” The governor’s expression—eyes wide open, eyebrows arched—told me what he was thinking: *OK, Mr. Bright Idea Guy, I’m serving as governor. I’m already doing my part. What are you going to do to help the cause?*

I knew he would need someone to get such a program up and running. Someone who was a believer in the power of great leadership. Someone who could help to bridge great leaders from the private sector into the public sector. *Oh my gosh, that would take a lot of time if you do it right*, I thought. *I can’t believe what I’m about to offer. Here, I have been skeptical about government for forty years. And now, after one enjoyable meeting with an enlightened governor, I’m going to offer to start some government reform initiative?*

I didn’t even wait for him to vocalize the need.

“I’ll do it,” I said. (Gulp.) And “it” turned into two things: (1) the book you hold in your hands, and (2) The Leaders Initiative, which is described in chapter 7.

## Why Leaders Are the Solution

I’m passionate about great leaders. I have seen many times how great leaders can turn around or improve organizations. And when you have the wrong leader or leaders, no amount

of policy change or strategizing makes a darn bit of difference. Governor Hickenlooper seemed like he really “got it.” So did his chief of staff.

However, while I was walking back to my car after that meeting, I felt a wave of doubt sweep over me. You know that feeling when you’ve just committed to do something big and scary, and you’re starting to wonder if it was such a great idea after all? *Just because I have a passion for leadership doesn’t mean that it’s the solution to society’s problems*, I thought. You’ve heard the saying by the psychologist Abraham Maslow, “If the only tool you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.” *Maybe I’m a leadership junkie, so the only solution to fixing government I see is leadership. And maybe all of the leadership success stories I’ve witnessed in the business world aren’t relevant to the world of government. Maybe it’s not a good solution. Maybe I’m not the guy.*

In Jim Collins’s landmark book *Good to Great* (2001), he urges leaders to focus on “First Who . . . Then What.” My book *Who* outlines a step-by-step approach to achieving the goal of successful hiring with 90 percent accuracy. But I wondered whether this fundamental solution for business applied to government.

And yet, a friend had once come to me with a very similar idea. Mark Gallogly serves on President Obama’s Council on Jobs and Competitiveness and was a senior managing director with the investment firm Blackstone Group before he cofounded Centerbridge Partners. Years ago, he recommended that I read Ben Franklin’s autobiography and emulate Franklin’s practice of getting talented people from commerce together to discuss issues of the day from a civic perspective and engage in problem solving. Mark is incredibly smart. As I recalled his counsel, I felt encouraged that I was on the right track.

And when I considered what I'd seen leaders accomplish when the *who* got solved before trying to tackle the *what*, I felt even more confident.

I have witnessed many versions of the following story. The members of the board of directors of a company are sitting around a large, shiny, wooden boardroom table. The conversation is going down the wrong path. They are taking a *what* approach to trying to diagnose and to fix a troubled company. The company has been struggling for several years. The CEO is asked to step out for the last half-hour so the board could talk candidly about the dire situation. The discussion among board members goes something like this: One board member says, "We clearly have a *financial* problem—margins are falling and our revenue is not meeting forecast either. I have some ideas about what we can do financially to right the ship." Another says, "No, we have a *product* problem—we are getting beaten on quality and we aren't positioning our core products right. We need to execute a whole product overhaul." And another says, "It's actually a *sales* problem—we just don't have the right sales process in place." I raise my hand and say, "You are wisely pointing out many *what* problems that this company is facing. But the job of the board is to make one great *who* decision—to hire the right CEO. Based on our analysis, you have a CEO problem. My recommendation is to focus your energy on hiring the right CEO, and then let that person fix all of these other problems you have identified." The board eventually takes advice. And it works. The new CEO hires more great people. He or she articulates clear goals to the organization, puts in place a plan to improve products and processes, executes with urgency and accountability, and the financial performance improves. I have seen this pattern many times. If you fix the *who* problem,

the what problems get better. What would stop great leaders from improving government in the same way?

I had to find out whether the principle applied in government. Because I was a newbie to government, I needed input from people with more experience. What if I could identify and interview great leaders in government to find out what their context was really like?

I was able to track down and talk to some amazing leaders. These conversations took me on an incredible journey of discovery. I'll share that journey throughout the book, but my discussions with these great leaders ultimately boiled down to three big insights: Great leaders tackle challenges head on. Great leaders are talent magnets. And great leaders deliver great results for stakeholders, sometimes against long odds. Given our current problems and level of dysfunction, we need great leaders in government now more than ever.

## **Great Leaders Tackle Challenges**

“One of the things that I have always been attracted to are long odds.” That sentence from my talk with Governor Jack Markell of Delaware energized me. It was the opposite of what I expect to hear from a politician. Or at least it is the opposite of the behavior I expect from them. I think most people feel that politicians talk a big game, but when it comes time to really tackle a challenge, they shy away out of fear of alienating voters.

Clearly, Governor Markell was different. His voice even sounded different from most politicians. He made clear points. He backed up his points with data. He sounded comfortable in his own skin—no need to overexplain, no excessive need to be liked, no used-car-salesman slickery.

“People in government are inclined not to take risks, because if they make a mistake it could be used against them in a campaign or they could read about it on the front page of the paper. And so one of my most important responsibilities as governor is to encourage the state employees and others to take healthy risks. You always try to minimize and mitigate the risk, but you’ve got to tackle challenges. If you don’t you’re not going to get ahead.”

That approach has led Jack Markell to continued success as governor. In his first year alone, he successfully tackled three intense challenges: he balanced the state budget despite an \$800 million deficit without laying off employees, he boosted educational initiatives, and he increased environmental protections. This is an amazing performance, especially compared to what most governors achieve in their first year in office.

Bold moves in the right direction were a consistent theme in my conversations with the amazing leaders I talked to. The state of Michigan has faced many challenges as the auto industry has evolved, leaving unemployment high and the state’s finances in shambles for many years. Imagine being elected governor of Michigan. I could not imagine it. So I asked him myself what it was like. And I was surprised by his upbeat and positive attitude.

Governor Rick Snyder of Michigan had taken office less than a year before I talked with him. His voice squeaked a bit with excitement when he got to the punch line of his stories. The thing that struck me first was the positive attitude he maintained, despite being at the helm of one of the most challenged states in the union.

Governor Snyder told me that he has a phrase that drives him: “relentless positive action,” or RPA. He chose a

solution-oriented approach. And he knew that he needed top talent to make a dent in improving his state's grim situation—a massive budget deficit, ten years of recession, a low ranking in terms of most economic indicators. “I looked at the candidate pool,” he told me, “and there were some good, well-intentioned people. But they were career politicians, and my view was that they would try to fix things through incrementalism. My mantra, my vision, was to *reinvent Michigan*. So I believed we needed leaders from the outside to challenge the norm and say, ‘The traditional ways of doing things are not good enough.’ I was hired, and that’s the way I describe it, for this job to follow through on what I ran on, and it’s about solving problems.”

And Governor Snyder has solved problems. In just eleven months, he balanced the budget and instituted a number of other amazing improvements that I will describe throughout the book. Get this: under Governor Snyder’s leadership, Bloomberg News recently placed Michigan in the number two spot in their ranking of the fifty states by economic health. He has more challenges to face, but he is off to a great start.

As a leader of a massively complex organization, you can never be sure of the final results of your decisions. But if you avoid the important and difficult challenges, the organization will never be able to reverse the Doom Loop of Bureaucracy.

## **Great Leaders Are Talent Magnets**

Mitch Daniels has built an astounding record of success as governor of Indiana. I had heard of him for years. My friends in Chicago have such profound respect for his reputation that they joke that they would love to outsource the management of the state of Illinois to the state of Indiana under Governor



Daniels. But people who don't know of his great track record tend to undervalue his leadership. A New York friend of mine told me once, "I saw that guy Mitch Daniels speak. Not exciting enough. His speech wasn't very entertaining. He'll never be elected president." I asked, "Do you have any idea what he has achieved in Indiana? And besides, would you rather have a government that is entertaining, or a government that delivers great results?" My friend did not choose to respond.

Governor Daniels has defied everything I previously assumed about government and the futility of trying to improve it.

He balanced the budget, upgraded services, put a greater focus on public safety and on children's welfare. The list goes on. Under his leadership, multiple agencies developed award-winning approaches that other states began to emulate. I knew he was somebody I had to talk to.

Thanks to an introduction by my governor, Governor Daniels agreed to a call with me. It was a call I knew I wouldn't be able to reschedule. Not with all of the priorities on his calendar. So you can imagine how stressed I was when my wife broke her nose in a weight-lifting accident and was scheduled to have surgery during the exact time of my call with Governor Daniels. Instead of rescheduling the call, I recruited my wife's brother to be my "stunt double" and stand by her bedside for forty-five minutes during her recovery while I snuck out into the parking lot and dialed in. The call proved to be nothing short of inspirational, and further disproved my assumption that government was hopeless and doomed to an eternity of dysfunction.

"I can remember so many nights giving some speech, getting all wound up," Governor Daniels said of his time on the

campaign trail. “I’d say, ‘I just know that if people of change can break through, individuals of outstanding talent and idealism will step forward to help us.’ And then I’d walk out to the RV and think, ‘Big mouth, how do you know that?’ But it happened. It really did happen.” One of those individuals of outstanding talent is Earl Goode, whom you will meet later in this book. The governor described in detail how he put together what sounds to me like an all-star team of leaders. “We ended up putting together an outstanding group of people,” Governor Daniels said. “It made all the difference.”

Great leaders are talent magnets. They’re focused on talent because they recognize that the best way to improve performance is to build teams with the most talented people. They recognize talent when it’s in front of them and scoop it up. They hunt talent down and do what’s necessary to bring great contributors on board. Governor Jack Markell of Delaware told me he brought in people from every age group and from every sector as he built his administration, to get a range of experience and an infusion of new ideas.

Talented people want to work with great leaders. They know that their skills will be put to good use, that they will be challenged, that they’ll be given new opportunities.

I’ll tell you more about what Governor Daniels has achieved in later chapters. But one thing was clear—he credited the talent in his administration for those successes. “A huge advantage for us was that in our administration, essentially everybody was new. I’m not sure we had anybody who had been in government before. And that was a big plus because they came in with what the Chinese call ‘young eyes.’ They asked all the right questions: ‘Why do we do that? Why don’t we try something else?’”

So when you put a Mitch Daniels into office, you don't get just one great leader. That one great leader will attract dozens or even hundreds of other highly talented people. And highly talented leaders produce something more than the hot air, scandals, and dysfunction that bureaucrats tend to produce. They produce results.

## **Great Leaders Deliver Great Results**

Fred Steingraber wanted to accomplish something simple. He wanted to figure out what the citizens of Kenilworth, Illinois, wanted. Then he wanted to find a way to deliver it. Fred has a round and wise face, and wears rectangular glasses. His voice has a little bit of drama in it, and he sounds a bit like the old sports announcer Howard Cosell.

“First of all, we are going to develop a set of priorities,” he told the village board soon after being elected as president (which is like the role of mayor). “Some of these priorities will involve significant time investment, and perhaps money. We want to understand what should be getting the most attention from the village staff and what the residents expect from us in terms of quality, service, and costs. I want a high level of transparency with regard to how we are allocating our resources. Second, we will not raise taxes before we have explored every option for reducing our costs. And third, transparency is absolutely critical in everything we do.”

Transparency is terrifying to many in leadership positions. Why? Because it only highlights how poor their results are! But for great leaders, transparency is a must. Great leaders are focused on delivering outstanding results. And transparency helps citizens or customers understand how well their needs are being met. “We communicate regularly on

what's happening, what work is being done, what results we're getting, the costs, what the time table is for completing projects, and so on," Fred told me.

I could tell you many stories of amazing results that are actually being delivered by government leaders right now. Balanced budgets. Better services. Less waste. Higher standards of living. Unfortunately, they're not being delivered everywhere. Not in most places. The Founding Fathers—Jefferson, Washington, Franklin, etc.—were a talented bunch of leaders. I believe that the Founding Fathers wanted checks and balances, so that power would never be too concentrated in the hands of tyrants. That makes sense. But there is no way that they wanted the accumulation of waste and inefficiency and dysfunction that now plagues our government. And it is no coincidence that we are not fielding a team in government these days that is anywhere as talented as the team that started this grand experiment of democracy back in 1776.

I asked Joe Scarlett, the legendary retired chairman of the Tractor Supply Company and founder of the Scarlett Leadership Institute, what he thought about the quality of leaders in government today. Joe has a big, booming, grandfatherly voice. He repeated the question I had just asked him. "Do I think we have our best leaders in government? No, I don't think so at all. I don't think we're coming close.

"In any organization, whether it's government or business or nonprofit, the better the quality of leadership, the more effective the organization's going to be—no matter what," Joe said. "The quality of the leadership reflects on the performance of the organization. A good leader sets the direction and the value structure, and then empowers his people. In government

today, there's really no clear leadership, there's no clear direction, and there's no value structure."

The absence of great leaders in government is why we are in the situation we are in. Therefore, let's change our focus from chasing the *what*—regulations, laws, policies, ideology—and solve the *who*.

### The Leadocracy Discussion

1. Fixing government is a “chicken or the egg” problem. Do you start with the *who*, or do you start with the *what*? What do you think?
2. What matters more to you, leadership talent or political ideology? In other words, who would you rather have representing you—someone who fits your political ideology exactly, but who has only modest leadership talent? Or someone who does not fit your political ideology exactly, but who has demonstrated exceptional leadership talent in their career?
3. In what ways do you think government is like the private sector and therefore should operate as such, and in what ways do you think government requires a different playbook for success?