

How and Why Positive Leaders
Transform Teams and Organizations
and *Change the World*

THE
POWER
OF
POSITIVE
LEADERSHIP

JON GORDON

Bestselling Author of *The Energy Bus*

———— The ————

Power

———— of ————

Positive Leadership

How and Why Positive Leaders
Transform Teams and Organizations
and *Change the World*

JON GORDON

WILEY

Cover image: © abzee/iStockphoto

Cover design: Wiley

Copyright © 2017 by Jon Gordon. All rights reserved.

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

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at www.wiley.com/go/permissions.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for damages arising herefrom.

For general information about our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Names: Gordon, Jon, 1971– author.

Title: The power of positive leadership : how and why positive leaders transform teams and organizations and change the world / Jon Gordon.

Description: Hoboken : Wiley, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index. |

Identifiers: LCCN 2017008997 (print) | LCCN 2017034146 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781119352037 (ePDF) | ISBN 9781119351702 (epub) |

ISBN 9781119351979 (hardback)

Subjects: LCSH: Leadership. | Employee motivation. | Organizational change. | BISAC: BUSINESS & ECONOMICS / Leadership. | BUSINESS & ECONOMICS / Motivational. | BUSINESS & ECONOMICS / Management.

Classification: LCC HD57.7 (ebook) | LCC HD57.7 .G66674 2017 (print) | DDC 658.4/092–dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017008997>

Printed in the United States of America

*To Ken Blanchard, for teaching me and showing me
how a true positive leader lives and leads.
Your example and support changed my life and
I am forever grateful.*

Contents

1	From Negative to Positive	1
2	Real Positive	7
3	Positive Leaders Drive Positive Cultures	13
	<i>Your Most Important Job</i>	16
	<i>Culture Beats Strategy</i>	17
	<i>Know What You Stand For</i>	19
	<i>More than Words</i>	21
	<i>Positively Contagious</i>	22
	<i>Create a Culture that People Feel</i>	23
	<i>Invest in the Root if You Want the Fruit</i>	24
	<i>You Must Keep Building Your Culture</i>	26
4	Positive Leaders Create and Share a Positive Vision	29
	<i>A North Star</i>	32
	<i>A Telescope and Microscope</i>	34
	<i>Dabo Swinney's Vision</i>	34
	<i>Keep the Vision Alive</i>	38
	<i>Make the Vision Come Alive</i>	38
	<i>My Vision</i>	40

5	Positive Leaders Lead with Optimism, Positivity, and Belief	45
	<i>Believe It and You'll See It</i>	50
	<i>If You Don't Have It, You Can't Share it</i>	51
	<i>Feed the Positive Dog</i>	51
	<i>Talk to Yourself</i>	52
	<i>It's All How You See It</i>	53
	<i>Tell Yourself a Positive Story</i>	54
	<i>Challenge or Opportunity</i>	56
	<i>Shark or Goldfish</i>	56
	<i>Think Like a Rookie</i>	57
	<i>Defeating Murphy</i>	59
	<i>Inside Out</i>	59
	<i>Distort Reality</i>	60
	<i>Leadership Is a Transfer of Belief</i>	61
	<i>Lead with Faith Instead of Fear</i>	63
	<i>Be an Over-Believer</i>	64
	<i>Don't Stop Believing</i>	66
	<i>Your Leadership Journey</i>	67
6	Positive Leaders Confront, Transform, and Remove Negativity	69
	<i>Your Positivity Must Be Greater than All the Negativity</i>	72
	<i>No Energy Vampires Allowed</i>	73
	<i>Why Wait?</i>	74
	<i>The First Step Is to Transform</i>	75
	<i>Start at the Culture Level</i>	75
	<i>Remove the Negativity</i>	77
	<i>Sooner or Later</i>	77

<i>Lead from Where You Are</i>	79
<i>Implement the No Complaining Rule</i>	79
<i>Michael Phelps's Positive Leadership</i>	82
<i>Don't Be Negative about Negativity</i>	83
7 Positive Leaders Create United and Connected Teams	85
<i>Connection Is the Difference</i>	88
<i>Team Beats Talent When Talent Isn't a Team</i>	91
<i>Dabo Swinney's Safe Seat</i>	93
<i>Collaborate and Facilitate</i>	94
<i>Don't Let Your Reptile Eat Your Positive Dog</i>	95
8 Positive Leaders Build Great Relationships and Teams	99
<i>Love Does</i>	101
<i>Love Is the Greatest Leadership Principle on the Planet</i>	103
<i>Rules without Relationship Lead to Rebellion</i>	104
<i>Communication Builds Trust</i>	104
<i>Where There Is a Void in Communication, Negativity Fills It</i>	106
<i>Leading by Walking Around</i>	108
<i>Listening Is Communicating</i>	110
<i>Enhance Your Positive Communication</i>	110
<i>Be an Encourager</i>	113
<i>Believe in Others More than They Believe in Themselves</i>	114
<i>Help Your Team Become Unstoppable</i>	115
<i>Connect One on One</i>	117
<i>Be Committed</i>	118

<i>Serve to Be Great</i>	119
<i>Doing the Laundry</i>	120
<i>It's Not About You</i>	123
<i>Commit to Coach</i>	124
<i>Commitment Requires Sacrifice</i>	125
<i>When You Help Others Improve, You Improve</i>	126
<i>Elite of the Elite</i>	127
<i>Positive Leaders Care</i>	128
<i>Develop Your Caring Trademark</i>	129
<i>The Sandwich</i>	133
9 Positive Leaders Pursue Excellence	135
<i>Humble and Hungry</i>	137
<i>There Is No Finish Line</i>	139
<i>Demanding without being Demeaning</i>	139
<i>Love and Accountability</i>	140
<i>Love Tough</i>	143
<i>Craftsmen and Craftswomen</i>	144
<i>The One Percent Rule</i>	145
<i>Clarity and Action</i>	146
10 Positive Leaders Lead with Purpose	149
<i>Find and Live Your Purpose</i>	153
<i>Share the Purpose</i>	155
<i>Inspire Others to Live Their Purpose</i>	155
<i>Purpose Driven Goals</i>	156
<i>One Word</i>	159
<i>Life Word</i>	160
<i>Leave a Legacy</i>	161
<i>Give People Great Stories to Tell</i>	162
<i>Life and Death</i>	164

11	Positive Leaders Have Grit	167
	<i>Know What You Want</i>	171
	<i>Know Your Why</i>	171
	<i>Love It</i>	172
	<i>Embrace Failure</i>	173
	<i>Keep Doing Things the Right Way: Trust the Process</i>	174
	<i>Ignore the Critics; Do the Work</i>	175
12	Lead the Way Forward	177
	Notes	189
	Acknowledgments	191
	Bring the Power of Positive Leadership to Your Organization	193
	Power of Positive Leadership Resources	194
	Other Books by Jon Gordon	195

Chapter 1

From Negative to Positive

*Being positive doesn't just make you better;
it makes everyone around you better.*

I'm not naturally a positive person. People think I am because of my books and talks, but the truth is that I have to work hard to be positive. It doesn't come naturally to me. In fact, I find it ironic that I would write a book like this—and that my life's work centers on the importance of positivity. It's true that we teach what we need to learn. I know that my quest to become a more positive person and better leader has made me a better teacher.

I grew up in Long Island, New York, in a Jewish-Italian family; with a lot of food and a lot of guilt; a lot of wine and a lot of whining. My parents were very loving but they were not the most positive people in the world. My dad was a New York City police officer who worked in undercover narcotics. He fought crime every day and wasn't a big fan of positivity. I remember waking up in the morning and saying, "Good morning, Dad." He would say in his thick New York accent, "What's so good about it?" My dad was Al Bundy before Al Bundy was Al Bundy.

By the age of 31, I was a fearful, negative, stressed-out, and miserable husband and father to two young children. My wife had had enough. She gave me an ultimatum: Change or our marriage was over. I knew she was right that I needed to change. I knew that I was allowing the stress of life and the fear

of not being able to provide for my family to get the best of me. I told my wife I would change and began researching ways I could be more positive. At the time, positive psychology was an emerging field, and I read everything I could about it. I began to practice positivity and write about the things I was doing. I met Ken Blanchard, who became my role model. I began taking “thank you” walks to practice gratitude, enjoy the outdoors, and feel grateful instead of stressed. This was a life-changing practice that not only energized me physically, emotionally, and spiritually, but also provided time for many profound insights and ideas to come to me.

One of these ideas was *The Energy Bus*. In case you haven’t read it, it’s about a guy named George who is miserable and negative. His team at work is in disarray and he has problems at home. George was easy for me to write about because he was based on me and my struggle with negativity and adversity. George wakes up one Monday morning to discover his car has a flat tire and he has to take the bus to work. On the bus, he meets Joy the bus driver, who, along with a cast of characters, teaches George the 10 rules for the *ride of his life*. Their advice not only helps him become a more positive person, but also a better father, husband, and leader at work. On one level, George demonstrates that positivity is a difference maker in business, education, life, and sports. On another level, George represents the fact that every one of us will have to overcome negativity, adversity, and challenges to ultimately define ourselves and our team’s success.

Since *The Energy Bus* was published in 2007, I’ve had the opportunity to work with many Fortune 500 companies, businesses, professional and college sports teams, hospitals, schools,

and nonprofits that have utilized the book. I've met many amazing positive leaders and have witnessed firsthand the power of positive leadership. I've seen how they have led, inspired, and transformed their teams and organizations. I've observed the impact they have had and the results they have achieved. I've also researched many positive leaders throughout history and learned about their paths to success. There is indeed a power associated with positive leadership, and my goal with this book is twofold. First, I aim to explain how and why positive leaders make a difference. Second, I intend to provide a simple framework filled with practical ideas that will help anyone become a positive leader. It's one of the most important things a person can do because one positive leader will inspire many others to become positive leaders as well. My daughter wrote her college admission essay last year and it said, "When I was young my mom struggled with her health and my dad struggled with himself. But over the years I watched my dad work to become a more positive person. Then he started writing and speaking about it and sharing his message with others. I saw people change for the better and I know that if he can change, and they can change, the world can change." Her words brought tears to my eyes because I realized that my one decision to be a positive leader not only impacted my life but also my marriage, my children, my team at work, and everyone around me. My hope is that you too will discover the power of positive leadership in your own life. I know that being a positive leader doesn't just make *you* better; it makes everyone around you better. You can start today!

Chapter 2

Real Positive

We are positive, not because life is easy.

We are positive because life can be hard.

It takes a lot of work to create a world-class organization. It's hard to develop a successful team. It's not easy to build a great culture. It's challenging to work toward a vision and create a positive future. It's difficult to change the world. As a leader, you will face all kinds of challenges, adversity, negativity, and tests. There will be times when it seems as if everything in the world is conspiring against you. There will be moments you'll want to give up. There will be days when your vision seems more like a fantasy than a reality. That's why positive leadership is so essential. When some people hear the term *positive leadership* they roll their eyes because they think I'm talking about Pollyanna positivity, where life is full of unicorns and rainbows. But the truth is that we are not positive because life is easy. We are positive because life can be hard. Positive leadership is not about fake positivity. It is the real stuff that makes great leaders great. Pessimists don't change the world. Critics write words but they don't write the future. Naysayers talk about problems but they don't solve them. Throughout history we see that it's the optimists, the believers, the dreamers, the doers, and the positive leaders who change the world. The future belongs to those who believe in it

and have the belief, resilience, positivity, and optimism to overcome all the challenges in order to create it.

Research by Manju Puri and David Robinson, business professors at Duke University, shows that optimistic people work harder, get paid more, are elected to office more often, and win at sports more regularly.¹ Research by psychologist Martin Seligman also shows that optimistic salespeople perform better than their pessimistic counterparts.² And psychologist Barbara Fredrickson's research demonstrates that people who experience more positive emotions than negative ones are more likely to see the bigger picture, build relationships, and thrive in their work and career, whereas people who experience mostly negative emotions are more likely to have a narrower perspective and tend to focus more on problems.³ Daniel Goleman's research demonstrates that positive teams perform at higher levels than negative teams.⁴ John Gottman's pioneering research on relationships found that marriages are much more likely to succeed when the couple experiences a five-to-one ratio of positive to negative interactions; when the ratio approaches a one-to-one ratio, marriages are more likely to end in divorce.⁵ Additional research also shows that workgroups with positive-to-negative interaction ratios greater than three to one are significantly more productive than teams that do not reach this ratio. Teams with more negative interactions are more likely to be stagnant and unproductive. The positive energy you share with your team is significant. According to Wayne Baker, the research he and Robert Cross conducted shows that "the more you energize people in your workplace, the higher your work performance." Baker says that this occurs because people want to be around you. You attract talent and