

# Why Live a Surpassing Life?

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ARE YOU HAPPY? Are you overperforming in your life and leadership? If you were to get graded right now, would you get an A+? Are you using your talents fully, developing strong relationships, feeling better and stronger every day, increasing your financial resources, known for a great reputation, leading your people well, successful and knowledgeable? If so, congratulations! There is no need for you to read this book.

But, if you feel you still have opportunity in your life, that you have more to give and receive, that you are not living a life beyond measure, that you would like to increase your happiness and satisfaction, I would like to welcome you to the Surpassing Life. Surpass means to “exceed expectations” and do more than you thought possible.

In *The Surpassing! Life*, I will share with you fifty-two life lessons to help you achieve personal excellence. During my “eclectic” life, I’ve had the benefit of many different roles, including:

- ▶ Nuclear submarine officer
- ▶ Strategic planner for British Petroleum and Disney
- ▶ Oil futures and options trading group manager during the first Gulf War
- ▶ Plastic resin salesman
- ▶ Finance Leader for Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, including the team that negotiated Hong Kong Disneyland
- ▶ Leader of Disney’s Epcot theme park after 9/11

- ▶ Chief Customer Officer for Hilton Grand Vacations
- ▶ Entrepreneur
- ▶ Consultant
- ▶ Public speaker
- ▶ Author
- ▶ Church starter and elder
- ▶ Husband for over thirty years
- ▶ Father of a son and twin daughters

I've attended incredible schools, including the United States Naval Academy and Harvard Business School. I've met fascinating people and traveled around the world. My mentors have been world-class leaders with invaluable lessons. Through all this, I have been blessed with great knowledge that can benefit you in your life.

These lessons can dramatically improve your life and leadership. By applying the information in this book, you can increase your happiness, improve your health, have more money, develop strong new relationships, become more knowledgeable, release your leadership potential, and succeed. Come join me, and surpass your wildest dreams!

# How to Use This Book

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**T**HE *SURPASSING! LIFE* has fifty-two short sections with ideas to dramatically improve your life and leadership. You can read through from start to finish, read individual chapters or focus on single ideas. Some people read one idea per week, to have a year of surpassing thinking.

Regardless of the path you choose, don't attempt to do everything at once. Pick a few items and do them for twenty-eight days. After doing something daily for twenty-eight days, scientists have found that your brain actually changes and you create a habit. Notice how your life is better, which will reinforce the habit. Then, select a few more items and do them for twenty-eight days. Before you know it, you will have made significant improvements in your life, and be on your way to excelling beyond measure!

## 17. Playing Favorites

*Rejoice in your special talents, and recognize others.*

— C. S. LEWIS

*But I also want you to think about how this keeps  
your significance from getting blown up into self-  
importance. For no matter how significant you are,  
it is only because of what you are a part of.*

— BIBLE, 1 CORINTHIANS 12:19

Diversity and inclusion is a significant theme at Disney parks and resorts. The rallying cry used by Disney is R.A.V.E.—Respect, Appreciate and Value Everyone. I really like this message, as it captures the idea that every person is important and makes a difference. As you live out the idea of respecting, appreciating and valuing everyone that you meet, you will develop strong relationships of mutual admiration. It pains me to watch a person smile and greet a fellow traveler at the airport, but ignore the custodian as if he was not there. We all have a tendency to judge a person's value and only interact with people who have an equal or greater "value" than us. And some actually demean people who are perceived as having less value.

I wasn't supposed to play favorites as the leader of Epcot. But, I have to admit that I did have a favorite group of Cast Members—the Custodial team. This team was very proud of the work that they did every day, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, keeping Epcot spotless. I tried to attend many Custodial pre-shift meetings. When I did, you could hear a buzz around

the room that the Vice President was there. I would often start the meetings by asking the group, “Who is more important—me or you?” I would go on to say that if I were gone for a month, very few Epcot Guests would notice. It might impact our longer-range plans and there may be a few small hits but, overall, the park would keep running well. However, if the Custodial team was gone for a day, imagine what would happen—trash bins overflowing, restrooms filthy, kitchens unsanitary. So, who is more important?

In 2004, Richard Branson, the billionaire leader of the Virgin companies, had a reality television show entitled *The Rebel Billionaire: Branson’s Quest for the Best*. Through a series of business and physical challenges, Branson eliminated contestants, with the final contestant winning the opportunity to lead one of Branson’s companies, Virgin Worldwide. One episode featured a business presentation that the team had to create and then present to Branson. The team worked on the presentation and was told to go across town by limousine. One member of the team was the clear leader and was a favored candidate to win the ultimate prize. When the group arrived at the building exit, the limousine was not there. Finally it arrived. Words were exchanged with the limousine driver, everyone got in, and they arrived at their destination. Richard Branson was not in the presentation room, and the group was told to present to some of his executives. The favored candidate did a brilliant job presenting and answering questions. At the end, the door to the conference room opened and Richard Branson walked in, dressed in a chauffeur’s uniform. He stared directly at the favored candidate and told him he would never run one of his companies. The picture then went to video of the interaction

with the limousine driver, and showed the candidate berating the chauffeur, who was Richard Branson in disguise, for being late and stupid. “If this is how you treat someone who is serving you, you will not serve as a leader in the Virgin organization,” said Branson. Branson saw that this young leader did not respect, appreciate and value everyone, and his relationships would suffer because of it.

I used to put on a Custodial costume and walk around Epcot, panning and brooming. It was as if I was invisible. I could talk to Guests, watch how managers interacted with Cast Members, and gauge the service of the operation much better than when people knew the VP was in the park. And, it sent a clear message to the Cast at Epcot that I believed every job and every person was important.

Are you known as a person who respects, appreciates and values everyone? If so, you will find people will want to know you and build relationships with you. On the other hand, if you tend to demean and belittle others, you’ll lead a lonely and often bitter life. The Bible tells us that we should “in humility, consider others better than yourself.”<sup>7</sup> If you approach people this way and express genuine interest in them, you can create strong relationships and a wonderful, surpassing life.



## Action Points

- ▶ Respect, appreciate and value everyone, especially those who serve you.

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<sup>7</sup> Bible, Philippians 2:3

- ▶ Get “in costume” and do other peoples’ roles to understand their life.
- ▶ Consider others better than yourself.



## **Payoff**

Deeper relationships, greater respect and appreciation of others, a diverse and inclusive work and personal life.

## 29. Uniform Races

*There is never enough time, unless you're serving it.*

— MALCOLM FORBES

*He who every morning plans the transactions of the day and follows out that plan, carries a thread that will guide him through the maze of the most busy life. But where no plan is laid, where the disposal of time is surrendered merely to the chance of incidence, chaos will soon reign.*

— VICTOR HUGO

*All my possessions for a moment of time.*

— ELIZABETH I

*How does a project get to be a year behind schedule? One day at a time.*

— FRED BROOKS

Besides active listening, the second most important skill for successful leaders is time management. A common refrain heard when talking about great leaders is “how do they manage to do it all?” The secret is effectively using every minute of every day. There are 525,600 minutes in a year. How well do you use each one?

I learned the value of a minute at the Naval Academy during my first year (Plebe) summer. Plebe summer is an intense training period when you are indoctrinated into the military way of life. During the two months, you are purposefully required to do much more than can be physically done in the



time allotted. One of the favorite exercises during the summer is “uniform races.” All the plebes are lined up in the hall. An upperclassman yells out a uniform and a time (“Dress Whites. Two minutes. Go.”). You are required to race back to your room, change into that uniform, and return within the specified time. Sometimes, you are required to take a shower or shave in between changing. Other times, you will be given instructions to put on different combinations of uniforms. For the first few uniform races, very few plebes make it back in time. But, as the summer progresses, you learn how to optimize and shave seconds off each step in the process. You start off thinking that you could never change in two minutes, and end up finding out that you can do it with time to spare. You find out just how much you can do in two minutes. I learned the value of uniform races when the academic year started, and I had to change clothes quickly during the day. I also saw the value when I entered the business world, and often had to race from a late business meeting or flight and change clothes for dinner.

The best use of your time is to take a great time management course. Lee Cockerell, former EVP of Operations for Walt Disney World, teaches a comprehensive and highly effective time management program. Lee is so passionate about time management that he taught the course to thousands of Cast Members when he was at Disney, and continues to teach the course to business leaders today. I encourage every leader to take this course ([www.leecockerell.com](http://www.leecockerell.com)).

A few of my learnings regarding time management are:

- ▶ Write down your tasks. The strongest mind is no match for the weakest pen and paper. My to-do lists when I led Epcot often had over 150 items. There is no way I could ever

remember that many things. By writing them down, I could ensure that nothing slipped through the cracks.

- ▶ Prioritize, prioritize, prioritize. Some people use an “A, B, C” system, while others use different symbols or time periods. No matter what you use, you have to make decisions about what needs to be done first.
- ▶ Review your items first thing in the morning and last thing in the evening. This gives you a plan for the day, and then feedback about how well you executed on your plan.
- ▶ Delegate and “automate.” I’ll talk about delegation in a later section. For “automate,” I am referring to creating habits for the things you do daily. For example, you shouldn’t have to think about working out or where you fit it in your calendar. You should have a daily habit of exercising at a particular time and just do it then. Your exercise time might be 6:30–7:30 AM every day. It is in your calendar that way, and you know that is when you work out. Morning and evening routines are not boring—they are a great way to simplify your life.
- ▶ Schedule time for the “important” as well as the “urgent.” Oftentimes, urgent items crowd out important items, when the important items are more critical to your long-term career. You should classify tasks into Urgent-Important; Not Urgent-Important; Urgent-Not Important; and, Not Urgent-Not Important. Clearly, the Urgent-Important tasks should have a high priority, while Not Urgent-Not Important tasks can most likely be delegated or not even done.
- ▶ Schedule thought and “blank” time. Leaders need thought time to develop strategies and process plans. You also need blank time to take care of the urgent items. One of my leaders, Eddie Carpenter, who was the Chief Financial Officer for Disney Parks and Resorts, would typically schedule the day

before and the day after his vacations without any meetings. This allowed him to get everything accomplished before he left, and have a day to catch up when he returned, greatly reducing his stress and increasing his productivity.

- ▶ Be ruthless about getting rid of non-productive time. Always have something to read or do with you. With smartphones, you can answer emails, read newspapers and make calls using your handheld device. Time is money, and work time is time that you could be spending with your family. Imagine that you are a lawyer that bills \$500 per hour—over \$8 per minute. Spending twenty minutes in an examining room waiting for a doctor would cost you \$160. Don't read old magazines—spend your time on your smartphone doing productive work.
- ▶ One of the best pieces of advice from Lee's course is to “do something today that will benefit you in five years.” Many people get so caught up in the moment that they don't do anything that will help them in the future. This might include taking care of your health, rebalancing your investment portfolio or contacting someone you haven't talked to in awhile.

John Lithgow said, “Time sneaks up on you like a windshield on a bug.” His statement is both humorous and accurate. You need to take control of your time or risk getting squashed by life.



### Action Points

- ▶ Recognize the value of time. A minute is a long time if you use it well.
- ▶ Take a time management course and use either a paper planner or smartphone software to plan your day.

- ▶ Prioritize and review.
- ▶ Delegate and automate.
- ▶ Use waiting time effectively.
- ▶ Do something today that will not benefit you for five to ten years.



## **Payoff**

A full, rich, rewarding life with accomplishments beyond measure.

## Conclusion

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MY GOAL IN WRITING *The Surpassing! Life* was to help you improve your life and leadership. After sharing some of the ideas in my weekly newsletters, I've received testimonies of the transformative power and positive behaviors readers have experienced as they have put the ideas into action. I hope you have a similar story, and would like to hear from you.

Thanks for reading this, and I hope you now go out and excel beyond measure!

The book cover features a teal background with stylized white clouds and a row of ladders at the bottom. One ladder is yellow and reaches a cloud, while the others are grey and shorter. A large white cloud in the center contains the number 52 and the subtitle.

52

Practical Ways  
to Achieve  
Personal Excellence

The  
***SURPASSING!***  
Life

BRAD REX

# Would You Like to Have Money, Health, Honor, Relationships, Knowledge, Leadership, and Success Beyond Measure?

*The Surpassing! Life: 52 Practical Ways to Achieve Personal Excellence* provides easy, time-proven concepts to simplify your life, increase your happiness, and surpass all expectations. With intriguing chapters like A \$23 Cup of Coffee, Submerged for 70 Days, Behind Closed Doors, and Humble Success, you'll learn useful secrets that will make you shine:

- A \$23 Cup of Coffee—add over \$500,000 to your retirement account
- Sleep Deprived—learn how to get a good night's rest
- Tell Me Your Story—develop new, strong friendships
- 13 Years—find out how to add hours of productive time to your day
- Decisions, Decisions—make great decisions with this easy process
- This, Too, Shall Pass—become a realistic optimist and take on any challenge
- Who Are You? What Do You Want?—create new focus and energy for your life
- Plus 45 more great chapters

Each section takes only minutes to read, but can benefit you for a lifetime. Find out what other happy, successful people already know, and start living the *Surpassing!* life today.

Brad's book, *The Surpassing! Life*, highlights many of his Disney experiences and stories as Epcot's leader. *The Surpassing! Life* . . . does just that. The difference between having a good life and a great life is gigantic. This book will propel you to great.

**LEE COCKERELL**

Executive Vice President (Retired & Inspired) and Author, *Creating Magic*, Walt Disney World Resort

"Brad Rex is one of the best business leaders I know, and yet he is also extraordinarily successful in his personal life. I am delighted that he is now sharing his "secrets" with the rest of the world in this entertaining, yet very practical book. Anyone who applies Brad's 52 lessons is sure to wind up in the top 1% of all people in terms of their personal success and happiness."

**KIM LOPDRUP** Senior Vice President, Darden, Inc.

"I lead a series of Christian sports camps that host over 10,000 youth every summer. I have known Brad Rex and his family for ten years, and I am thrilled that he has shared his amazing experiences and knowledge in *The Surpassing! Life*. Every parent should give this book to their kids so they can excel in life and leadership, and the parents should read it, too. This is a smart, happy way to live."

**JOE WHITE** Kanakuk Kamps, President, Founder, Kids Across America



Brad Rex has led a *Surpassing!* life. He was a nuclear submarine officer, leader of Disney's Epcot® theme park for five years, Executive Vice President/Chief Customer Officer for Hilton Grand Vacations, and a distinguished graduate of the United States Naval Academy and Harvard Business School. Brad is a noted public speaker, husband for 30 years, and father of three, with 52 valuable lessons for *Surpassing!* living.

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