

THE CATALYST EFFECT

12 Skills and Behaviors to
Boost Your Impact and Elevate
Team Performance

The Catalyst Effect cuts straight to the chase on what it takes to be a true leader through collective trust and empowerment. When one chooses to give up their own personal victory for the progression of the team, the results are powerful and real. This book shows you how. A superbly inspiring read!

— *Stephen M. R. Covey, The New York Times and
1 Wall Street Journal bestselling author of
The SPEED of Trust and coauthor of Smart Trust*

I truly love the ideas in the book. Thoroughly researched and full of practical suggestions, *The Catalyst Effect* lights the path for every person in every organization to see themselves as leaders. It shows us that everyone is a leader and can get better at leading, if they recognize that truth.

— *Angela Duckworth, Founder and CEO, Character Lab,
Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of Psychology,
and bestselling author of GRIT*

When Yo-Yo Ma brought together master musicians from different cultures to form The Silk Road Ensemble, he sought to instill a unique sound and a cohesive spirit. I have had the privilege of being part of the Ensemble and experiencing performances that achieve heights beyond our dreams.

The Catalyst Effect engagingly describes the leadership and teamwork principles that bring his vision to life. Through Yo-Yo's natural style, he embodies the ideas presented in this book. *The Catalyst Effect* shows how these skills and behaviors can be applied in all types of organizations to produce superb results.

— *Sandeep Das, Tabla player and composer, collaborator with
Yo-Yo Ma for the Silk Road Ensemble,
Grammy Award Winner*

The Catalyst Effect is at once inspirational and pragmatic. The authors offer a fresh perspective of what teamwork and leadership can look like in flatter organizations. Through the rare combination of a strong narrative and solid research, the authors deliver the insights and tools needed to lead, regardless of his or her formal title. Each of us can learn something from this book. I did.

— *Daniel H. Pink, Author of DRIVE and TO SELL IS HUMAN*

With society seeming more fragmented and divided, the responsibility of leaders to bring people together to accomplish great things can be more difficult than ever before. *The Catalyst Effect* is a practical primer to help all leaders inspire teamwork and collaboration to boost team performance and achieve great results.

— *Bill Stanczykiewicz, Director, The Fund Raising School,
Senior Lecturer, Philanthropic Studies,
IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy*

The Catalyst Effect competencies fit hand-in-glove with Servant Leadership principles. The model invites readers, whether they are in informal or formal leadership roles, to identify and develop the key skills that will increase their effectiveness and impact.

— *Pat Falotico, CEO,
Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership®*

Some leaders are viewed as solitary gems. They outshine their peers with an intense luminosity that makes them stand apart. That view, however, may be erroneous or at least incomplete, according to Jerry Toomer, Craig Caldwell, Steve Weitzenkorn, and Chelsea Clark, authors of *The Catalyst Effect*. The writers argue that some of the most impactful leaders succeed by elevating the performance of their team, by making not just the solitary gem but the entire necklace dazzle. *The Catalyst Effect* highlights a dozen competencies that anyone can cultivate to become better at catalyzing leadership and teamwork. Whether you are a leader or a team member, you will learn a lot from this book.

— *Mukul Pandya, Editor-in-Chief, Knowledge@Wharton*

The best leaders and colleagues have something in common: they make everyone around them better. This is a hands-on playbook for building that capability in your team.

— *Adam Grant, New York Times bestselling
author of GIVE AND TAKE, ORIGINALS,
and OPTION B with Sheryl Sandberg*

The Catalyst Effect has given me a number of useful tools and new approaches in leading my organization and civic partnerships and in supporting my teammates as they lead. I also believe it will be a big help to my college-student son as he prepares to find his way in his career. The book's

framework makes it very easy to review the most important advice and relevant wisdom in each leadership situation and for each individual. I highly recommend it.

— *Brian Payne, President and CEO of the Central Indiana Community Foundation and the Founder of the Indianapolis Cultural Trail*

The Catalyst Effect illuminates the elements of leadership that are essential in any successful ensemble endeavor — in business, sports and certainly in the arts. Outstanding orchestra performances require each individual to focus on the team goal, understand when to lead and when to follow and uphold a standard of excellence that inspires their colleagues and their audience. This book provides incredible insight into the way these key concepts apply across sectors and what they look like in practice.

— *Gary Ginstling, Executive Director, National Symphony Orchestra, Artistic Affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts*

What is important is not a formal title, but how you impact your teams and your organization as a catalyst from wherever you are. The authors skillfully blend real life examples from business, sports and not for profit organizations with sound research in a highly readable manner. You will learn the “why, what and how” of being a catalytic leader.

This is a highly valuable book for professionals and leaders at all levels who work in teams across different settings and cultures!

— *Julie Fasone-Holder, CEO JFH Insights, Independent Board Member, Retired SVP Dow Chemical*

Building successful groups rarely happens by chance. It takes wisdom. This book offers such wisdom by focusing on specific skills that team members can develop to enhance each other’s success, thereby enhancing overall team performance. Catalytic leadership makes the whole much more than the sum of its parts.

— *Hersh Shefrin, Mario Belotti Professor, Santa Clara University*

At a time when the social contract between employer and employee is changing, *The Catalyst Effect* provides a valuable perspective on how employee engagement can thrive. Investing in *everyone’s* ability to lead at the

appropriate time in team settings can foster a vibrant culture and drive impact. The book is filled with ideas for application and was a pleasure to read.

— *Bryan Adkins, CEO, Denison Consulting*

The authors have brilliantly uncovered a powerful component of team structure, appropriately coined it “catalyst,” and provided a great guide to apply the concept. The catalyst concept coupled with strong leadership cannot deliver anything but powerful results. Effectively and clearly written with colorful and real life examples to supplement the concept, this is a must read for those interested in leading from wherever they are. I will recommend this book to all I know, not just in the business world.

— *Wahida Saeedi, Global Finance Leader,
Pharmaceutical Industry*

The Catalyst Effect is fun, engaging, insightful, theoretically sound, highly useful, and my new favorite leadership book! I can’t wait to use it in my leadership class next semester. When it comes to books for people who aspire to high levels of impact in an organization, but don’t have a fancy title, *The Catalyst Effect* fills a void. Whether used as a reading in a university course, material to develop young professionals, or as a guide to show senior leaders how to identify hidden catalysts in their organization, the lessons in this book will prove incredibly valuable.

— *Bradley R. Agle, George W. Romney Endowed Professor,
Marriott School of Management, Brigham Young University*

Some people simply help their colleagues perform better — often in ways that have been difficult to measure and cultivate in the past. This book is a giant step toward identifying and proliferating the catalytic capabilities that can make every organization more successful.

— *Thomas H. Davenport, Distinguished Professor, Babson College and
Digital Fellow, MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy, and
author of *Competing on Analytics* and *Only Humans Need Apply**

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BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*This book is passionately written for the catalysts —
the glue-guys and gals who make their teams better by
leading from the middle*

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Behind each book is a story. There is a spark of an idea; a personal experience; a powerful feeling that generates the motivation to share ideas with others, and ultimately to write them down.

The idea for our field research and the book was sparked by the notion of the no-stats all-star. As an athlete and as an ultimate team performer, Shane Battier made others around him better when he stepped on the court. We were curious. If we explored this idea with professionals and leaders in different organizations beyond sports, what would we hear?

“Do you know someone who when they step on the court or the field or into the conference room or onto the stage makes everyone around them better, and if yes, what is it that they do? Describe this as specifically as you can.”

What we heard from 80+ interviews with individuals across sports, business, and the arts provided the raw input for the identification of the 4 cornerstones and 12 competencies. There was validation and a level of consistency in what we heard.

Our personal experiences also validated the idea as we have played on sports teams, participated in choirs and ensembles, and been members of teams in a wide variety of work and volunteer settings. Each of us could point to times when a team was better because of a catalytic member. As we scanned the literature we also saw an ample number of leadership articles and books that were written from the perspective of someone with formal authority: we saw a need for further exploration of how people “lead from the middle” rather than from the top.

We also closely tied the approach to teamwork and leadership at Butler University called The Butler Way, which is very consistent with the cornerstones and competencies we have identified in our field research.

So with the spark of the idea, the passion from our personal experiences, and the motivation to share the ideas with others, we embarked on a several years' long journey of field research and writing.

Brad Stevens, then Butler's men's basketball coach, provided initial encouragement and input. His early thumbs-up regarding the idea of the "catalyst" was key to our decision to dive into the interview process. And his continuing counsel and support in the midst of his demanding schedule has made our work better. Beth Perdue Outland of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra added creatively to our early thinking and the field interview question set, and she made available several members of the orchestra and the ISO staff. Lee Dicklitch, a Butler MBA program graduate and Indy area sports leader, has been invaluable during the entire life of the project and the writing process. His continuing willingness to partner with us on research, interviews, and website ideas is a gift.

Most importantly, we found a wonderful developmental editor. Jeanne Glasser Levine is everything you hope for in a writing partner. She "gets it" and is passionate about our catalyst effect ideas. Her deep experience in publishing provided a roadmap by which we navigated the final year of writing, and her writing skills and easy working style make her both catalytic and appropriately tough on a gaggle of four authors!

— Jerry, Craig, Steve, and Chelsea

Two threads in my life have come together in this book. The first relates to my experience as a high school and college athlete when I played for teams both good and bad. Some of the teams struggled mightily and experienced little success. Some of the teams went about their work in a low-key, professional, and enjoyable manner. They regularly competed for victories and championships. As I was finishing my Ph.D. at Pitt and beginning to work at Butler University, the Butler men's basketball team enjoyed what was becoming a trend, shocking victories over larger schools. The victories over supposedly better teams happened so often that it challenged my thoughts about luck and random chance.

At about the same time, I was honing my skills teaching leadership. Early in my teaching experience, I loaded the readings packet with cases about top CEOs. This was and is a common practice. However, I began sensing a disconnect between what I was teaching and the kind of opportunities MBA students were likely to experience in the next five to ten years.

When Jerry Toomer and I began exploring an article on Shane Battier in *The New York Times*, I did not know that I would find a potential explanation to the organizational success questions that came from my earlier years in sports, *and* an approach to leadership that was much more relevant and hopeful for my MBA students. The phenomenon was catalytic leadership.

For me, catalytic leadership can provide teams and organizations with the missing ingredient for success. It can also offer leadership tools to a 28-year-old MBA, seeking to impact her organization without the advantage of being the CEO.

I would like to thank a consistent supporter of this project, Brad Stevens. I appreciate his advice and friendship. When Brad left Butler University to coach the Boston Celtics, I said goodbye and thank you, not really expecting to have much contact with him beyond that. As a person who really lives his values, he still makes time for me, despite the crushing demands of an NBA coach.

My parents, Carl and Carolyn, deserve a hearty thank you. They endured years of my academic mediocrity while I tried to divine the purpose of working hard in school. My children (Maya, Talia, and Elena) also deserve a hearty thank you as the last year of work on this book has eaten into time that might normally be dedicated to them. The upside is that the book has given us much to talk about as we have explored these ideas together.

Last and most important, I have enjoyed the unwavering support, affirmation, and love of my wife, Diana. She is, unlike me, a uniquely optimistic, hopeful, and positive person. Those qualities, as well as being witness to her wildly productive ways, have changed my opinion about how good people should act and what they can accomplish.

— Craig Caldwell

I am very grateful for the love, support, and inspiration of my wife, Bonnie Kabin, throughout this project and all other times. My contributions to this endeavor were only possible because of the many great colleagues, teachers, advisors, friends, and clients from whom I have learned over the years. Many were excellent role models. Most shared their wisdom and expertise generously. All helped me to learn, grow, and become adept at applying my capabilities to help others — and their organizations — be more successful. I humbly thank them all for enriching my life and career.

— Steve Weitzenkorn

Producing this book has certainly been a team effort! I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Jerry Toomer and Dr. Craig Caldwell for inviting me to join this project, first as a research associate and then as a coauthor. If not for their original interest in the concept of the no-stats all-star, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to explore the concepts of leadership and teamwork so deeply. Additionally, I am incredibly grateful to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Tom Carsey, who taught me how to be both a good researcher and a good person — one who gives back and *pays it forward*. Thanks to my husband, Phillip — who has been a constant source of support and motivation as I've worked on this book project. Thanks to his parents, my in-laws, who have shown a keen interest in my research and encouraged me throughout the process. Thanks to my parents — who always believed I could do anything I set my mind to and encouraged me to pursue my passions. Most importantly, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who created me with specific abilities and endowed me with unique talents, which allowed me to serve the research team and the aims of this project.

— Chelsea Clark

Thanks to Linda, Chris, and Winda (Setyaweni) Toomer for their continuing love and support of my work and career over the past many years.

I'm also grateful for the encouragement and input from many wise people over the years: key mentors, coaches, conductors, colleagues, precocious students, and, of course, our 80+ interviewees. Without them this book would not have been conceived or written.

In addition to the people mentioned above, there were contributors, aka catalysts, for the stories and callouts in the book. Thanks to each of you!

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— Jerry Toomer

FOREWORD

As a student at DePauw University, I took a class called, “Servant Leadership.” It was tremendously impactful and introduced me to the idea of leading by serving others. Up to that point, I had always been under the impression that all leaders were strong-willed, vocal, and had an undeniable presence in the room. But after that class, it all started to make a little more sense — the true leaders were the ones that were empowering others, often out of the limelight. We learned that anyone in an organization can empower coworkers or teammates, so ultimately everyone in an organization has a leadership responsibility to do just that.

After graduating from college and completing a brief stint as a marketing associate at Eli Lilly in Indianapolis, I kicked off my coaching career at Butler University. Every day of the 13 years that I was there, someone would ask me, “What makes Butler so special?” The simple answer is the people. The administration has always done an exceptional job of creating an environment where employees are both aligned and empowered. The faculty and staff are committed to teaching, leading, and challenging the students to think not only about what they want to do with their lives, but how they can impact the lives of others. And, the students inspired us all to think daily about the best ways to maximize their intellect, creativity, ambition, and commitment to working together as a broader community. At Butler, service to others was a big part of the fabric of the school, and there were many great examples of servant leaders.

In 2009, two professors in our Lacy School of Business, Jerry Toomer and Craig Caldwell, wanted to talk about an article that they had read in *The New York Times*. The article was about NBA player, Shane Battier, and his unique impact on the court, despite the fact that he was considered to be more of a role player than a star. The article was very insightful, and not only illustrated Shane’s value as a basketball player but also gave fans of the

game a greater insight into the use of analytics that consistently impacted decisions made by their favorite teams.

We met and discussed the article and some of the corresponding research they had begun conducting. As they researched the “Battier Effect” in sports, business, and the arts, three things became very clear to me. First, it was hard to find organizations that viewed leadership as a collective responsibility, instead of a task shared by a chosen few. Second, it was clear that Shane Battier, and others like him, were truly unique in their willingness to fully embrace their role, whatever it may be, for the good of the whole. And finally (and ironically), we found ourselves at a point in time with the Butler Basketball program where we had a group of these players on one team, at one time. The more we talked, the more I realized we had something truly special, and it was our job to take advantage of it.

Over the next couple of years, our staff spent a lot of time thinking about how we could promote “catalytic leadership” over more traditional forms of leadership. We debated the need for team captains. We talked even more about the importance of clearly defining roles that fit the strengths of each of our players. Like every other team, we had always emphasized the characteristics shared by catalysts — embracing that role, doing your job well, and putting the team above self. We always wanted to have 15 players doing that, but we had never thought of that in terms of having 15 *authentic leaders*.

After hearing Craig present his research over the years to prospective athletes wanting to major in business (I probably wore him out with all of the campus visits we asked him to participate in), we invited him to speak to our team in the fall semester of the 2012–2013 school year. As is usually the case, we were looking for something that our team could latch onto at the start of October that would be with us throughout the entire season. We knew that Craig’s message would immediately resonate, and when he used the phrase “catalytic leadership,” we knew we had something that would last. The next day we made t-shirts for our players. On the front of those t-shirts was our typical Bulldog logo. On the back was one word: CATALYST. It would serve throughout the season as a reminder that we shared ownership and were responsible to fulfill our role for each other.

We are all responsible for the health of the organizations we serve. I hope that you appreciate this book, as much as I appreciated all of the thought and research that Craig, Jerry, and their coauthors, Steve Weitzenkorn, and Chelsea Clark, invested in writing it.

Brad Stevens
Head Coach, Boston Celtics

PREFACE

The world is changing and it's changing fast. Leadership at all levels must keep pace.

Organizations are constantly adapting to new realities in technology, to worker sophistication and preferences, and global market pressures. By necessity, organizations have become flatter and leaner. These structural changes affect internal working relationships.

Leadership and teamwork must meet the challenges presented by this whirlwind of continual change — not just regarding these trends but also that workforces are evolving dramatically. They are experiencing greater diversity than ever before as well as growing generational and cultural differences. The challenge is to stay true to organizational values, align with overarching strategic objectives, and achieve specific team and individual goals. That's where catalytic leadership comes into play.

In a high-velocity world, this book reveals the *how* — the specific mind-sets and competencies — for winning at individual, team, and organizational levels. How perspectives are broadened. How performance is heightened. How team effectiveness is improved. How team members who lead successfully without formal authority produce group decisions that maximize commitment, raise the performance of others, and ultimately generate higher-level results. This is what we call the “Catalyst Effect.”

The Catalyst Effect is created by fusing leadership and teamwork into a dynamic, optimistic, and cohesive force that raises the performance of everyone involved and elevates overall team success.

The Catalyst Effect provides a practical, research-based roadmap for developing and applying 12 key competencies to multiply an individual's impact and drive progress toward team goals. We conducted over 80 in-depth interviews with highly successful professionals and leaders in

business, sports, and the arts. Participants provided robust examples of catalytic leadership and teamwork in action. We then performed content and behavioral analyses that allowed us to isolate the 12 key competencies that comprise catalytic behavior. These examples are featured throughout the book, illustrating the impact of each competency and showing how to apply that particular skill.

WHAT CREATES A CATALYST EFFECT?

The Catalyst Effect is created by fusing leadership and teamwork into a dynamic, optimistic, and cohesive force that raises the performance of everyone involved and elevates overall team success. Being a catalytic leader or a catalytic teammate has little to do with official authority and everything to do with personal and professional credibility, putting the team and the pursuit of mission-oriented goals ahead of personal interests, and striving to elevate the performance of everyone you touch to accomplish big picture goals. It also has little to do with climbing career ladders, although catalysts may be prime candidates for creating value at higher levels.

When you master the jungle gym, you develop a broader range of competencies, greater agility, and the ability to fuse multiple skill sets.

Catalytic leadership skills may be most effectively developed in flatter organizations by mastering what Tobi Lütke, the CEO of Shopify, calls “jungle gyms” rather than vertical career ladders (Bryant, 2016). When you master the jungle gym you develop a broader range of competencies, greater agility, and the ability to fuse multiple skill sets — and therefore gain greater ability to contribute and help others and your team in multiple ways. When you watch kids on jungle gyms, they often help and encourage each other. They offer tips. They catch friends when they lose their grip or fall off balance. You’ll also see this at gymnastic camps. This is how trust is built and respect gained — which are essential building blocks of effective leadership and catalytic teamwork.

The 12 competencies are your catalytic jungle gym, each step bringing you higher and closer to behaving like a catalyst in your work life, on your

teams, and in your personal endeavors. Each taken alone, the competencies may seem obvious, but become catalytic when they are used in combination and ultimately engrained in an individual's behavior. It is then that they inspire and enrich the performance of the entire group.

The path to becoming a catalytic teammate and leader begins here.