

POWER IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK

BE CHIEF

IT'S A CHOICE, NOT A TITLE

RICK MILLER

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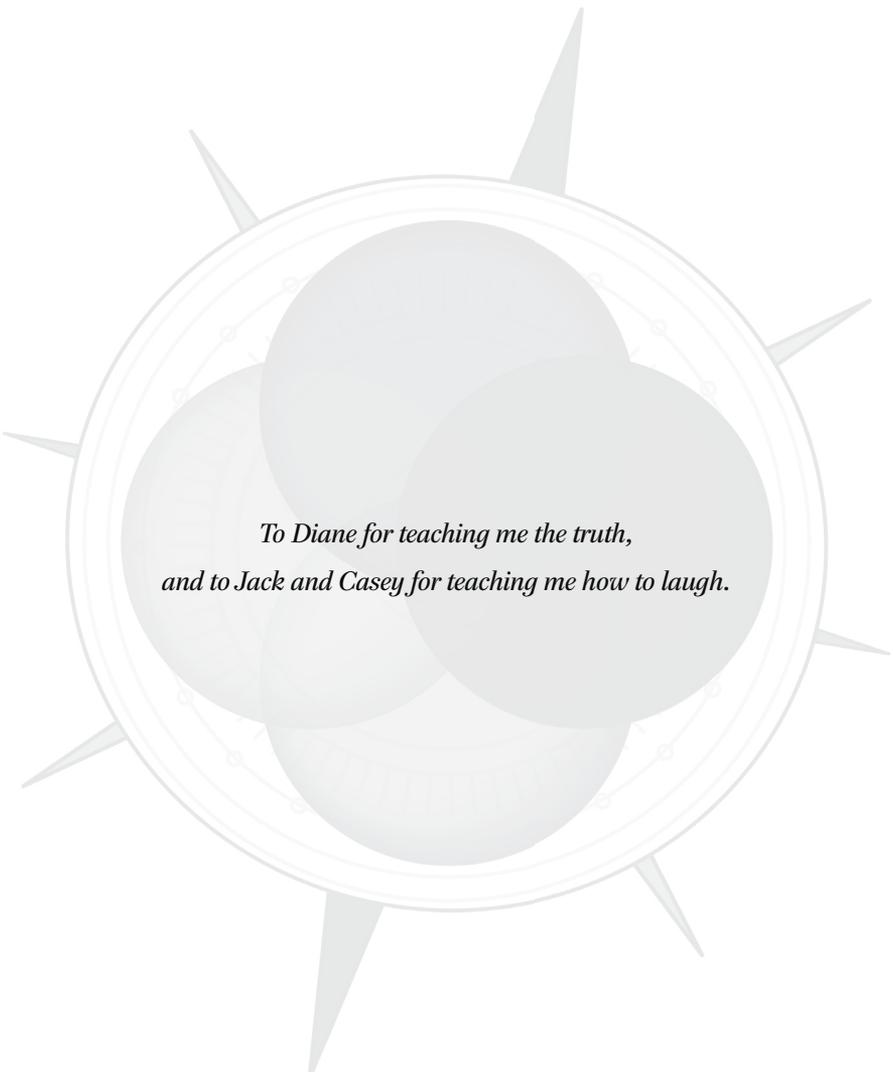
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*“See simplicity in the complicated.
Seek greatness in the small things.”*

Lau Tzu



*To Diane for teaching me the truth,
and to Jack and Casey for teaching me how to laugh.*

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Introduction

Conventional wisdom about Chiefs is all wrong. It says Chiefs are special. Chiefs are chosen. Chiefs have titles. And only those at the top have the power to truly be Chief. Fresh out of business school, I aspired to be among those at the top. I would work hard to move up the ladder in the hope that I could eventually earn a job as a Chief Executive Officer.

For years, I trusted that wisdom. It guided me into and through bigger and bigger roles where I was responsible for generating results for companies in many difficult situations, developing plans for success that focused on a clear vision and a winning strategy to meet customer needs. Those plans often required raising capital, controlling costs, beating competition, and building positive community relationships in order to succeed.

But as I worked my way up through these assignments and had the privilege of working with many individuals who possessed a power that had nothing to do with their title or position, my views shifted. In addition to these traditional areas of focus, I realized that the real key to *sustaining* success is to build an organization where a very high percentage of group members are fully engaged and feel the power of being Chief.

I'll distinguish my use of the word *power* from its usual interpretation where power is equated to position, title, control, or authority. The power of being Chief is not at all conventional. It's a power that comes from within rather than being imposed upon from outside or above. It's a steady, sustainable power rather than a huge burst that fizzles out before long. It's a quiet, insightful power that we tap into to guide our decisions, choices,

and future rather than an outside influence that veers us off our course. It's a power that will feel right rather than a power that you question. It's a power that fully engages you and everyone around you.

As any management executive can attest, unleashing that kind of power is easier said than done. Today, reports indicate that seven in 10 workers are not giving 100 percent on the job. Many feel apathetic and powerless. Researchers estimate the cost of this lost productivity at almost \$500 billion annually. As an individual, you may be surrounded by disengaged team members, and you may even face that same challenge yourself. By understanding the simple choices outlined in this book, you can solve both problems.

I have also learned that being Chief is actually contagious. And the goal is to create what I call *viral engagement* where everyone feels the opportunity to be Chief, and Chiefs cascade throughout your organization.

In more than 30 years of personal experience I have seen that a single individual's choice to be Chief increases the chances that everyone in the group will engage fully as Chief. Your choices will help those who surround you make their own choices each day that create a positive, change-adaptive culture. You will help every individual lead in their own ways, consistent with their values, their compass, and who they are as individuals. With firm values, stronger relationships will be built inside your group, as well as between groups, that will unlock potential and contribute to sustainable success. The results are amazing. Enabling others to be Chief is the key to building a powerful organization.

The core of an organization's power is solely found in its

people. Their ability, influence, energy, and impact are what drive any organization. I know this because building powerful organizations is what I do. Now, to be clear, I'm not discounting the value of effective, integrated strategies in essential areas like customer relations, competition, financial capital, cost control, community affairs, and climate support. But, though they may be critical to establishing a powerful organization, successful strategies in each of these areas simply create the *conditions* for true power. People, at all tiers and within all departments, are where you'll find the proverbial magic. True Chiefs know how to tap into that power and send it rippling throughout the organization.

Finally, just as being Chief is not about the title, it's also not only about business. People can be Chief in families, communities, governments, social agencies, educational institutions, and ministries. In all cases, I have learned that being Chief means looking inside yourself for answers and direction rather than to others, including so-called experts. The power to be Chief is never given to you by someone else—being Chief is a choice you make. The power is all yours. Being Chief also means relying on a common set of values in both your personal and professional life. Being Chief means you can't do things halfway. You give 100 percent. You own it.

Being Chief increases the chances that everyone else will be Chief.

In this book I share the choices available to any member of a group or organization to increase their power, boost positive capacity, and increase the probability of sustainable growth and success.

The book is divided into three sections:

Part One covers some of my early lessons, successes, and failures, and describes a tool I developed to help people increase their real power. My Power Compass can be used to encourage and enable everyone to increase their clarity, energy, impact, influence, and confidence. These are the true attributes of power that a real Chief wields in an organization.

But since you have your own unique style of leadership, Part One is structured to help you build your own approach to being Chief. At the end of each section, you will be given questions to see how you can translate these new ideas and incorporate them into your own experiences.

Part Two offers five mini case studies describing difficult business situations where teams of Chiefs accomplished amazing turnarounds using the four *directions* of their own Power Compass, fueled by a set of core values unique to the individuals, teams, or organizations. In each case, powerful Chiefs at all levels delivered amazing productivity and remarkable results in very challenging environments. And those around them took notice and responded in kind.

These case studies offer a variety of business situations, including startup, mid-size, and multinational companies, with consumer, corporate, and government customers. They also include stories about a diverse group of women and men who held different levels of authority in departments ranging from finance, sales, and human resources to training and marketing. Each organization worked to solve problems, build powerful teams, and create sustainable growth. The key to success in each case was the ability of Chiefs at all levels to enable the power in themselves and others.

Each business situation, including the one you may be in today, is unique. I offer these diverse stories so that you can learn how you might apply the Power Compass to be Chief in your own unique setting. At the end of each case study, questions are provided to help you determine how the points offered might help you in your own workplace.

Part Three offers you the opportunity to build your own Power Compass. You'll be asked to look at your choices in five areas: discipline, creativity, support, insight, and values, as well as to think about what you stand for. Your "baseline" choices will be translated into a numeric score. Finally, you'll be asked the key question—are you as powerful as you'd like to be? Your Power Compass will help you chart your path. But the journey starts with understanding one crucial fact:

*The power to be Chief is a choice.
It doesn't come from a title—
it's a choice anyone can make.*

When I started my career, I consistently found myself in difficult business situations. At first, I thought it was bad luck, but over time I realized it was a gift. I learned I was built for turnaround leadership, and I found myself willingly taking roles that others shied away from. Over the first 25+ years of my professional life, I was recruited to lead turnarounds in organizations ranging from a startup to several multinationals. I was given titles including CEO, COO, President, Senior Vice-

President, and Vice-President and General Manager. Utilizing the underlying framework in my Power Compass, I earned a reputation as a turnaround specialist, a fixer, and a sustainable growth expert. One writer even called me a magician. But I can assure you that none of my titles helped our teams succeed, and there was no magic.

I learned to develop a model that became the foundation for everything I did throughout my career. I didn't tout it at the time, but the Power Compass was at work, guiding my actions, decisions, and thoughts as I worked through a diverse career.

Ten years ago, I founded my own company to share my expertise and serve as a confidant to many Chiefs, people with and without the title, in a wide range of companies including several of the most well-known companies on the planet. None of these individuals hired me because of the titles I held. In fact, these leaders are far more likely to refer to me as a student-teacher, a servant leader, and a go-to Chief. I much prefer those labels! Each Chief believed we could work together to drive sustainable growth in their organization, which we did and continue to do by applying the Power Compass. But since those relationships are confidential, you won't see them in this book.

What you will find throughout the book are the most impactful business lessons I've learned to apply with the organizations I served. These lessons have come from a diverse group of wonderful individuals. The teams of powerful people that I had the privilege to work with are those who deserve the credit for whatever success was attributed to me. This book is about their success, which I'm excited to share with you.

Before we dive in, I'll share a story with high stakes and a team of Chiefs that may have saved my life.

Chiefs in Iraq

Walking off the jet way at Baghdad International Airport, the first thing I noticed was a Rambo-like soldier and his security detail, armed to the teeth—guns, Kevlar bullet-proof jackets, the works. Within seconds, someone jammed a helmet on my head and someone else wrapped me in a bulletproof jacket. Walking rapidly and surrounded by a protective ring of armed guards, I was led through the airport terminal to our transportation: three custom, armor-plated Toyota vehicles cleverly disguised to blend in with the rest of the cars on the streets. This was not your average business trip.

It was February of 2005, and I was making my first trip to Baghdad and the Green Zone, the center of international presence inside Iraq. As President of the Government Solutions Unit at Lucent Technologies, a former U.S. telecommunications company, I had deployed members of my team of specialists to Baghdad months earlier. Our team's first assignment was to build a base of operations inside one of Saddam Hussein's former mansions. But our mission was to implement a citywide wireless communication network to increase public safety in Iraq's capital, something that had never been done before.

The team had been successful with their first big test. Just one month earlier, Iraqi citizens had voted in free elections for the first time in their history. It was a victory for everyone involved and our team took pride in the role we played. Though public safety officials in Baghdad initially displayed skepticism for the new tools at their disposal, by the end of election night those same officials were using our system to identify safe areas before calling family members to tell them where to vote.

They were believers. Many citizens voted safely that night and proudly displayed purple fingers—the mark given to voters that came to symbolize the promise of democracy. But the job was just getting started.

We needed to expand the wireless network beyond Baghdad to the rest of Iraq to support future elections. My role was to engage in meetings with senior Iraqi and U.S. officials to review the project and build on the positive results that had already been established.

My security detail was made up of former British Special Forces members led by Squad Leader Carter, the most intimidating individual I had ever seen. He was 6'2" and 220 pounds with a shaved head, square jaw, eyes that saw right through me, and a gun on each hip. Carter and his team of ten highly trained specialists had only one job that day: to keep me safe. My heart pounded in my chest and my thoughts raced in every direction as we hurried past the other travelers in the airport and made our way toward our vehicles on the terminal's lower level.

Carter took a seat next to me as we tucked into the safety of the bulletproof vehicle. The car doors closed quickly behind us with a quick pop, followed by a brief, pregnant quiet. "Four gunmen will be in the lead car," Carter began, with a point to the car ahead of us. "Another four will be following closely behind us." We were heading toward Baghdad's infamous Airport Road—the one and only way to the Green Zone. Two other gunmen would be with Carter and me in the middle vehicle to complete the convoy.

After ten minutes of roll drills simulating what would happen if we were attacked from different angles during our trip—I

would have to move quickly to either the front or back car—we headed for the Green Zone. I wrapped a bandana around my helmet-covered head in case someone caught a glimpse of me through the tinted car windows, and reviewed the emergency escape procedures I had just learned.

As we passed through multiple checkpoints, it was clear the military was on high alert. Recent days had seen an increase in IED (improvised explosive device) activity on Airport Road, evidenced by the constant stream of damaged vehicles along our route. I remember listening to radio conversations between Carter and members of the U.S. Military personnel who were monitoring movements of a “person of interest” as we sped by remnants of broken down military vehicles on both sides of the road. That’s when it struck me, *“The person of interest is me.”* I was no longer thinking about the plane ride or my upcoming meetings. I focused on my task at hand, making every effort to keep my emotions in check.

Thanks to the efforts of Carter and his team, I was safely ensconced less than an hour later at our facility in the Green Zone, which served as headquarters and our base of operations. Carter and several members of his team would stay with me during my trip. In everything we did while we were at camp, from pre-travel planning and post-travel evaluation reviews to their constant vigilance, these men set a tone of assured focus. Each of us had a job to do. And each of us could trust the other to do his job well. I was grateful to them for enabling me to safely contribute to this next phase of the operation.

Carter and the security team were actually an extension of a larger team assigned to our project in Baghdad. Together, the individuals in this group of dedicated U.S. and Iraqi Military

personnel, Lucent employees, and a network of contractors each risked their lives on a daily basis to accomplish the mission. My job was to support this high-performing team and get them what they needed to continue to build on their initial success.

Overall, my meetings with senior members of the U.S. and Iraqi Military, as well as senior Iraqi government officials, went well. The critical nature of our assignment was acknowledged and added resources were assigned to support the mission. In one particularly important session, I met with the Iraqi Minister of the Interior along with Ed Eldridge, our project manager and another Chief, to offer an update on our project.

*An entire team can step up to be Chief.
When they do, the results are magnified.*

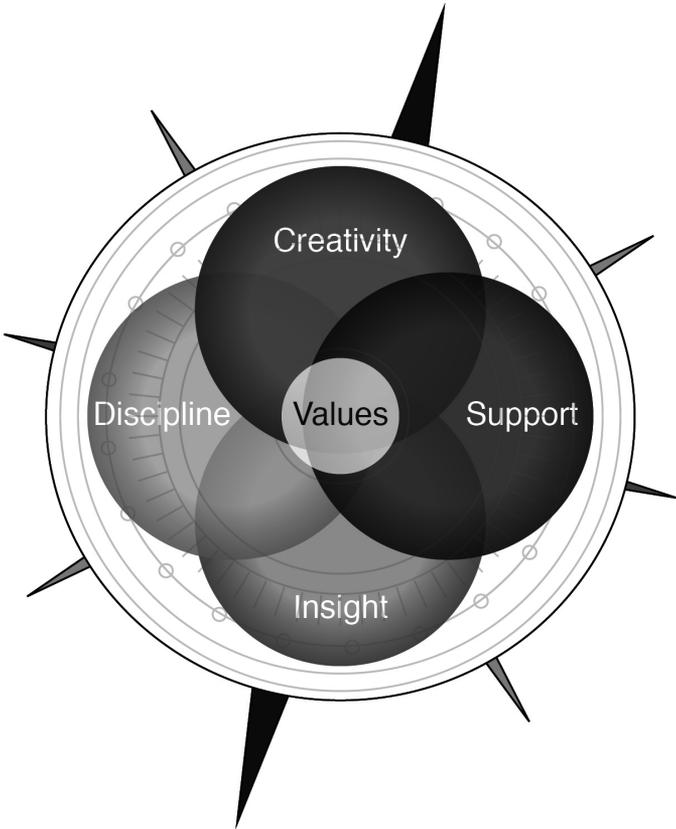
It was months before the next phase of implementation was completed. When we finished, the expanded communication network again played a vital role ensuring the safety of citizens who voted in October on a Constitutional Referendum and again in December to select the Iraqi Council of Representatives, this time with full Sunni participation and a 76 percent voter turnout. In the most challenging environment many of us had ever worked in, our team demonstrated productivity and resilience, working long hours while bombs periodically burst around us.

Who was the Chief in this mission? If you go by conventional definition and looked at an organizational chart, I was Chief. But I don't define Chief the way most people do.

When I first arrived at Baghdad airport, Squad Leader Carter was Chief, to be sure, but so was every individual who risked his or her life to get me safely to the Green Zone. More broadly,

the high-risk nature of this assignment mandated that every member of our team operated as Chief in his or her areas of responsibility.

It is a credit to every Chief on our team that we accomplished our mission.



{ONE}

Be Chief

I have been fortunate to be mentored by many kind people. Their generosity and wisdom enabled me to develop an approach to unlocking the power inside myself as well as the potential of those around me. What follows is a description of that approach, and a simple tool—a “Compass”—that anyone can use to help them find their way to unlocking their own power and the power in those around them. In this section you’ll learn to do just that.

Build a Compass

There are lots of ideas about leadership and where it should come from. I believe leadership, in general, and being Chief, in particular, is a choice available to everyone. To illuminate this choice—this set of choices, really—I developed the Power Compass.

Growing up, we didn't travel much. My dad worked hard and so when it was time for vacation, the last thing he wanted to do was pile us into the family car for a long drive to a new sight or city. He just wanted to take it easy and relax. Rather than taking extravagant vacations, which we couldn't afford, we took small day trips or simply drove to a familiar place using a different route. My favorite destination was a farm 20 miles from home that served the best ice cream on the planet. Maybe ice cream led to my love of roadmaps and my understanding of the importance of a compass: there's usually something good waiting for you when you get where you want to go.

Consider roadmaps. Your driving preferences may change during different times and under different circumstances, but a roadmap will always offer alternatives. At times the most direct way from A to B may not be the best way for you. Sometimes you want to go fast. Other times you want to slow down and enjoy the ride. Or, you might want to take a detour and travel through certain communities to reach your destination. And sometimes you may just want to take a new road. Then tomorrow, when both your starting point and destination change, a roadmap will continue to serve you well.

Early in my career I relied on what I learned about roadmaps as an analogy for life. I believed that no matter where I wanted to

go there would always be a road to get me there. But the analogy let me down when I found myself wanting to go places where others hadn't ventured before—where there was no paved road. It was then that I came to appreciate the value of a compass.

I learned that a compass is the ideal tool when you know what direction you'd like to go, but you are faced with the task of blazing a new trail. You might get advice and counsel from others that sets you off in the right direction, but getting to a new place will require your ability to listen closely to your own intuition, guided by your values, and to do things your own way. You will find that you make stronger choices and are more successful as you get better at connecting what you *do* to who you *are*. It is from here that your true power derives. That's your Power Compass.

As you will see throughout these pages, the Power Compass will help guide you through the choices you'll have to make as you carve out your path, ensuring that *what you do* stays aligned and consistent with *who you are*—thereby ensuring that your decisions are powerful.

Each of the Power Compass's five elements—Values, Insight, Creativity, Discipline, Support—offers choices that can be made by anyone, independent of level or position in any group or organization, to build success by creating a culture where people excel.

Enabling a team of Chiefs starts with you and your ability to answer important questions, such as:

- How can living my *values* bring out the best in me and those around me?
- How can I develop *insight* to learn more about myself?
- How can I use *creativity* to increase my positive impact?
- How can I use *discipline* to manage better?
- How can I *support* others to increase their positive impact?

Your Power Compass will help you answer those questions and determine the areas where you can increase your power, which we will discuss in Part Three of this book. The Power Compass has been extensively road tested and will help you, your team, and your organization navigate a path to success—yes, even in tough times.

By tapping into the power you already hold, you have the ability to be Chief whenever you choose to step into the role. And the values, history, and perspectives that make you who you are (and will determine the Chief you become) are an excellent place to begin.

Values and Fish Sticks

You expect to learn a lot when you go to college. I know I did when I enrolled as an undergrad at Bentley College.

While I have lots of great memories from school, one specific class and teacher stand out. In the fall semester of my junior year, I took a marketing class taught by a part-time faculty member who had been very successful in the business world. When he walked into class on day one, Mr. Malcolm Harris began the course with words that would change my life. He said:

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Marketing 101. I am here to teach you the two most important lessons required for anyone to have a real shot at achieving big-deal status in business. The truth of the matter is that there are really only two keys to business: First, you must understand customers; and second, you must understand competition. I may be the only teacher to tell you this: The best job to teach you about customers and competition is a job in sales. Get your degree and go get a sales job. Take the risk and go on commission.

I nearly dropped my pencil. A job in sales? Like most college juniors, I was convinced I could do anything, but Mr. Harris had thrown down a gauntlet that rocked me out of my comfort zone. The idea of taking a job in sales caused me to panic. And I could swear I smelled fish sticks.

I grew up in a middle-class family where money was often tight. My parents attempted to shield my brothers and me from the family financial issues, but as the oldest of three, I had a sense of when money was running low. My biggest clue came from what was on the dinner table: fish sticks.

When we were served cheap, breaded fish sticks on consecutive nights, I knew that money was tight. I grew up associating fish sticks with things not going well. I hated the taste of them and the bad feelings I had when I ate them. Now, fish sticks were the unlikely embodiment of my fear of failure, of my anxiety over financial instability. In fact, one of the reasons I was sitting in Harris' class, the reason I was pursuing business, was the opportunity to earn a good living. I wanted to be successful, earn a stable income, and make sure that I would never have to eat fish sticks again.

Now I had a professor I trusted telling me “the truth” that if I wanted to be a big deal in business, I needed to take a job with variable earnings that could potentially put frozen, breaded fish back on my dinner plate if I didn't make the sale.

Facing your fear and learning to live your values are essential parts of being Chief and building a team of Chiefs.

I could feel fear in the pit of my stomach, announcing itself in a way that always seems to come when you have unwittingly put yourself in a defining moment. I could walk out of the class and pursue something else or I could stay and do what it took to succeed in the field I wanted. Although fearful, I pushed ahead, trusting my teacher's advice. Three years later I finished my instruction as a computer sales trainee. By deciding to go into sales I had taken the first step toward increasing my power. I was bringing all of who I was into what I was going to do—even my fears and my pain points.

Choosing to face the truth and confront my fear was an early lesson that prepared me for what it would take to be Chief. Fish sticks were a motivating force (so help me, I was not going to eat fish sticks again) that eventually came to embody a value instead of a fear. I chose to bring who I was—my history, my perspective, my value system—into the work I was doing and, as I rose through the ranks, I realized that it was something that people around me responded to. By living my personal values in the professional sphere, I was able to lead in a way that was demonstrative instead of discursive; I gained authority through my character and my actions instead of my title or my demands. It also helped those around me to be Chief. Values are the foundation of relationships and of being Chief. And although my dad was my early role model, I have been blessed with many other mentors who reinforced this central message. Great relationships grow with compassion, forgiveness, respect, and empathy.

I also agree with the wisdom offered in the Talmud, the central text of mainstream Judaism that offers: *the highest form of wisdom is kindness*. We all have our own unique journey and a choice of which values we embrace. I have chosen four as the basis for my relationships: truth, service, connection, and equality.

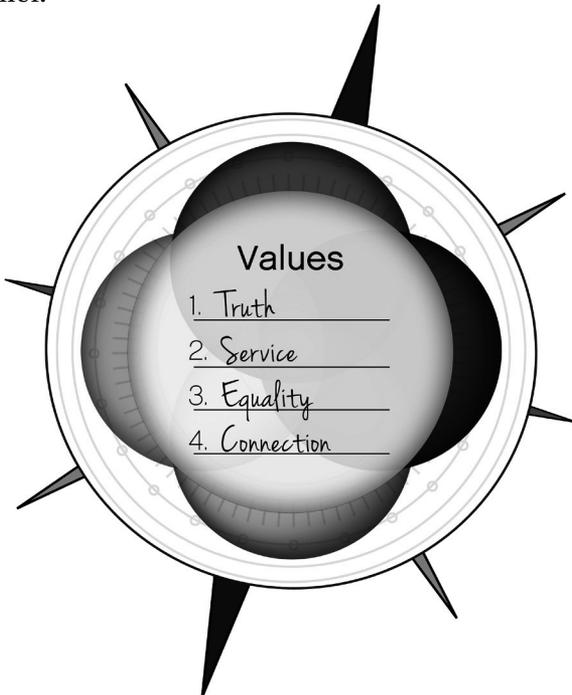
I believe truth is found in listening, learning, and feeling; and that the inner peace derived from truth brings wisdom and understanding.

I believe it is our responsibility to serve others in need with empathy and that we must learn to be humble as we administer aid and be open to receiving from those being aided.

I believe we are all connected in ways we have yet to fully understand.

I believe that we are all equal, and that every individual has an ability to teach and to learn.

But values are very personal and while I believe deeply in my values, you should have your own list. Your values are the foundation of your power to be Chief. It's important to take the time to determine what you stand for, but your power comes when you choose to regularly take a stand and act consistently in alignment with those values. As mine have done for me, your values will form a strong foundation as you set your own goals. They will also be critical to your ability to enable others to be Chief.



Your Turn. Please take some time to reflect on your own values. How can living your *values* bring out your best and the best in those around you? Consider the following questions:

- Have I spent the time to determine what values I want to stand for?
- What are those values?
- How can I make my values visible to others in how I speak, write, and act?

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