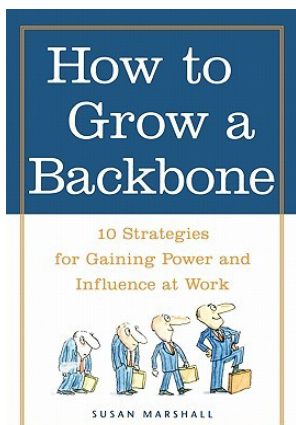
The image features a decorative header and footer consisting of a 2x5 grid of colored squares. The top row contains squares of teal, green, light green, yellow, and orange. The bottom row contains squares of orange, red, dark red, purple, and dark purple. The central area is a solid dark blue background with white text.

STRENGTHENING YOUR LEADERSHIP BACKBONE USER GUIDE

This program and user guide highlights concepts and content from Susan Marshall's *How to Grow a Backbone: 10 Strategies for Gaining Power and Influence at Work*. (Copies of the book can be borrowed from West Chester University's Office of Training and Organizational Development)

Use the following information, activities, and exercises to expand upon and reinforce the materials covered in the "Strengthening Your Leadership Backbone" video. The following strategies are included in this user guide:



Strategy ONE: Get the Big Picture

Strategy TWO: Turn Meetings into Discovery Sessions

Strategy THREE: Become a Jotter

Strategy FOUR: Get Eyes Wise

Strategy FIVE: Your Thinking Must Change

Strategy SIX: Associate on Purpose

Strategy SEVEN: Play Columbo

Strategy EIGHT: Determine the Power Sources

Strategy NINE: Lose the Excuses

Strategy TEN: Describe What You Think and Say So

Define competence:

Define confidence:

Define risk taker:

Name a person who you consider to have a backbone? Explain why you choose this person.

Think about it....

- 1.) Why do organizations spend so much time avoiding their employees vs. working with them?
- 2.) Why do strategic plans so often end up shelved? Why don't they?
- 3.) Why do so many people leave meetings and think, "I wish I had said (fill in the blank)"?
- 4.) Why are so many people angry at having to work with disruptive, negative co-workers?

Strategy ONE: Get the Big Picture

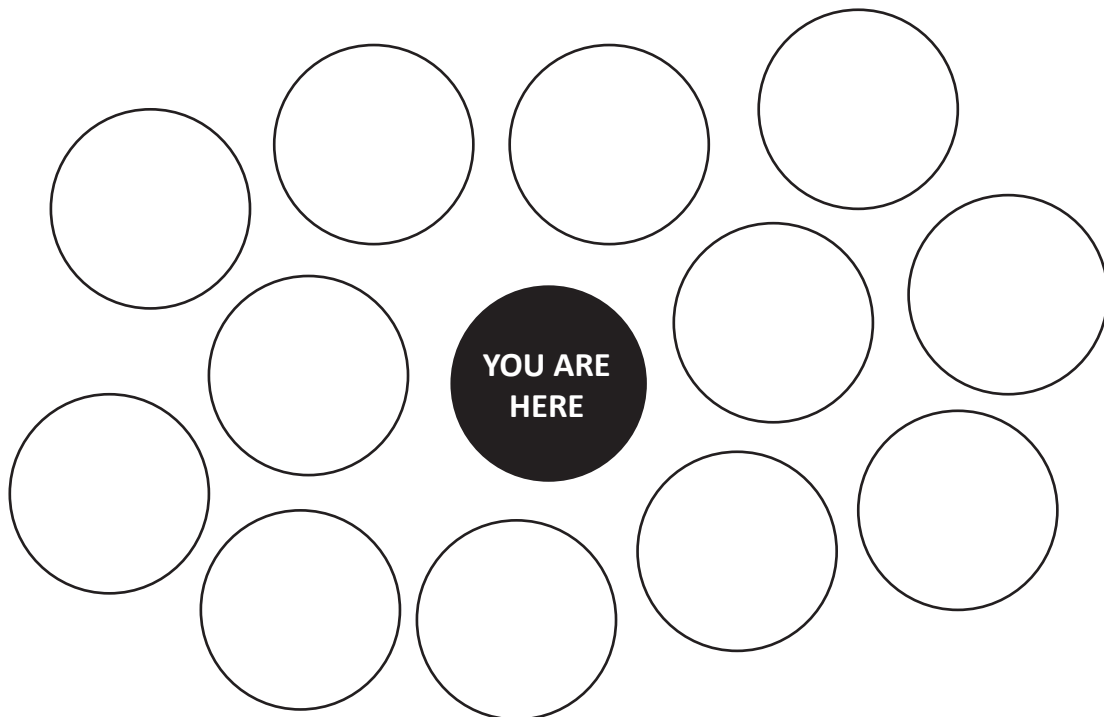
"In an age of discontinuities, the capacity to conceptualize and synthesize the whole, to see the connections between parts and be able to imagine the future, can be crucial."

- C.K. Prahalad, Co-Author, Competing for the Future

BACKBONE EXERCISE:

- 1.) Identify up to 3 projects, processes, or job duties that you work directly or indirectly with others. Write them in the table below.
- 2.) With a pen, write a contact in each circle (i.e. specific departments, people, students outside organizations that you connect with directly or indirectly). Draw more circles if necessary.
- 3.) Starting with you (in the middle) and using a marker color of your choice, draw the connections from the start to the end of the project/process/job duty. Use a different color for each project/process/job duty.

Projects/Processes/Job Duties	Connection Color	Your Connection	
		# Direct	# Indirect



Strategy TWO: Turn Meetings into Discovery Sessions

"Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way." - Booker T. Washington

BACKBONE EXERCISE: Schedule Your Attendance

Your next meeting (Meeting Name/Date): _____

Ask yourself these questions:

- 1.) Why your attendance is important?
- 2.) Do you know what is on the agenda?
- 3.) If you attend a meeting purely to obtain information, could you get the information a different way?
- 4.) If you attend a meeting to be updated on a variety of projects, but only a select few are relevant to you, could you limit your time in the meeting or get updates some other way?
- 5.) If you have information to distribute, can you do so without requiring people to assemble?
- 6.) If your meetings are routine, must you attend every one?
- 7.) If a meeting includes most of your colleagues, could someone brief you on it later?

People with Backbone

Don't waste time hating meetings—they tell you that each of these complaints has a solution.

Require agendas.

Set time limits for individual speakers.

Fix bad behaviors/attitudes, or change the players.

State an objective for each meeting, and specify how you expect to accomplish it.

Summarize each meeting.

Recap what happened and who is expected to do what, by when.

Explain resources—where to find them, how to access them and how to maximize

Strategy THREE: Become a Jotter

"There's always something new by looking at the same thing over and over." - John Updike

Why take your own notes if someone else has been assigned to do so?

- 1.) If you don't write things down, you're likely to forget. How does "I forget" sound to others?
- 2.) Your observations and thoughts are unique and important. The note taker may not know as much about the subject covered as you do.
- 3.) When you jot things down as they occur, and your own thoughts—you capture the reality of the situation. Otherwise, perception becomes reality.
- 4.) By recording what you see and hear, you create a context. Why is this a benefit? Nothing happens in a vacuum. When you capture the surrounding circumstances of an event, you better understand the catalysts...the "official" notes won't do this...chunks of the discussion get lopped off of recaps.
- 5.) When you disagree with someone who didn't take notes and is working strictly from memory, you'll have the upper hand.
- 6.) You engage your brain in what's going on. You improve your posture, literally and figuratively.

BACKBONE EXERCISES

For Competence:

- ☐ Stock up on notepads (or bring your Ipad), and get into the habit of carrying one everywhere. You'll look seriously professional, and it will remind you to pay attention to what's going on.
- ☐ Summarize what's happening. Note time, place, people, subject matter, major events, and whatever else feeds in to your discussion or meeting. Doodling disqualifies you! How did this help you?

For Confidence:

- ☐ Study your notes. Pay attention to what people said and what they subsequently did. See if you can figure out what caused any differences.
- ☐ Save your notes in a form that allows you to refer to them in the future. A few binders or electronic files should be sufficient to retain your most important lessons.

For Risk Taking:

- ☐ Buck convention and take notes. When you have information, insight, and/or ammo in a hotly contested spot, how has this strategy ensured you have the "last word?"
- ☐ Invite reality checks. Share your notes with a trusted friend, and see if your perspectives match. Listen to different viewpoints with respect for their validity.
- ☐ With notes in hand, take a stand. You may be wrong sometimes, but that's ok. Acknowledge your mistake and move on. How did you acknowledge your mistake? How did others react?

Strategy FOUR: Get Eyes Wise

"We are as much as we see. Faith is sight and knowledge. The hands only serve the eyes."

- Henry David Thoreau

BACKBONE EXERCISES

For Competence:

- ☐ When watching TV or old movies this weekend, pay attention to actor's eyes. See if you can pick up nuances you never caught before. Watch for mismatches between words and eyes. What did you watch and what mismatches did you find?

For Confidence:

- ☐ Pick someone you know well, and practice reading his or her eyes. Ask for candid feedback. If you're misreading eyes, it's important to understand how. And best to hear it from a friend. What was your feedback?

For Risk Taking:

- ☐ Practice using your eyes in different ways. Open them wide and ask a simple question that you've been a little afraid to ask.
- ☐ Disagree in silence. Establish eye contact with the person who differs, and hold it. What happened?

Strategy FIVE: Your Thinking Must Change

"It is not enough to have a good mind. The main thing is to use it well." - Descartes

BACKBONE EXERCISES

For Competence:

- ☐ Prioritize your thinking. If there's an urgent decision to be made, set aside other concerns to give it undivided attention. How many items are on your "urgent" decision list? What are your deadlines to make the decision?

For Confidence:

- ☐ Keep track of where your mind goes, and capitalize on the journey. Investigate the elements. Poke around in the big pieces to see what you can snap together. Recognize that the "right" answer doesn't exist.

For Risk Taking:

- ☐ Take time to think. This does not mean take time to procrastinate. This will be tough sometimes, especially when possible co-workers are taunting you, "If you knew what you were doing, this wouldn't take so long." What was your decision? What were the reactions of the parties involved?
- ☐ Practice "shucking". Shovel out your office. Compress your internet files and use e-mail mailboxes to store important information.
- ☐ Make independent judgments! Aim for a decision and stay on track...even when weak-backed rascals try to distract you. Who were your rascals and how did you overcome them?

Strategy SIX: Associate on Purpose

"Birds of a feather flock together." - William Turner

BACKBONE EXERCISES

For Competence:

- ☐ Pay attention to the judgments you make of other people. What judgments do you make?
- ☐ Stop and ask yourself why you hold particular opinion. What forms the basis for your assessment?
- ☐ Each time you judge someone in a group, recognize that you are making generalizations that may not be correct. Appreciate that others do the same about you. What generalization did you make that was incorrect and how did you catch yourself?

For Confidence:

- ☐ Listen to people talk about groups of which they're not a part. When it comes to gossip, if there is no substance, let it roll off. If there is, pay heed and ask what you need to do to be a part of the solution. Remember that ignoring the situation is not an option if you have a backbone.
- ☐ Associate with people who get the work done. Not only will you learn a lot, but you'll also be pegged as a positive contributor. To what extent are you associating with the people who get the work done?
- ☐ Follow your own growth agenda. Examine old habits and assess their value. If they do not add value, get rid of them. Which values did you decide to work on getting rid of?

For Risk Taking:

- ☐ Start weaning yourself from time or energy wasting associations of habit. What are your energy wasting associations? Who is your influential person and how has it drawn you into positive associations?
- ☐ Invest in your future. Create the self image you want instead of going along with what your crowd has assigned for you. What is the self image you want to have for yourself? What is it that you have to do to achieve this self image?

People with Backbone

They like what they like for a reason they understand and accept.

They acknowledge that others' tastes and preferences may differ and are ok with that.

They recognize that others will judge them for better or worse based on where they see them congregate. They are ok with that.

Their strong backbones have come partly as a result of their facing up to disagreement and sometimes disapproval. They are who they are, and that's that.

They are going to understand others preferences and accept that others will base an impression about you on your choices. If those people are important to them, they will pay attention. If not, they won't.

Strategy SEVEN: Play Columbo

"It is better to know some of the questions than all of the answers." - Unknown

BACKBONE EXERCISES: Always Ask Questions from "The Question Bin"

5 Questions to ask OTHERS to help you see where people are coming from.

- 1.) Why? (Ask "Why" 5 times in a non-threatening way/inquisitive —Pay attention to the "Glimpse into Lean Six Sigma")
- 2.) How do you know that? (It is not asked in a challenging way—it's a request for information)
- 3.) What's next? (Problem-solving follow up question when the situation has been)
- 4.) What do you think? (Tough one for those without backbones)
- 5.) What will you do? (Cousin to the "what's next"...but takes it to the individual level.
Backbone people find that this is where you find the restraining forces & driving forces.
People w/ backbone get vague answers to this question and then they quickly move on)

What were my successes?

What were my challenges?

4 Questions to ask YOURSELF to reach a better understanding of your own mind-set which fosters backbone.

- 1.) Why? (Why do you feel a certain way or wish something would happen)
- 2.) What do I think? (You better be prepared yourself if you are asking the question of others)
- 3.) What do I want? (When you know what you want, you can better articulate what you want and understand the reason why you think and feel the way you do. People w/o backbone squirm from this question)
- 4.) What am I afraid of? (People with backbone acknowledge that sometimes they are afraid—but that's risk taking!)

What were my successes?

What were my challenges?

Strategy EIGHT: Determine the Power Sources

"People who know little are usually great talkers, while men who know much say little." - Rousseau

BACKBONE EXERCISES

For Competence:

- ☐ Identify the "shirtsleeves" and watch what they do. Who are they? What do they do?
- ☐ Inspect intimidation techniques. See how people who want power but don't have it use dominance tactics. How have you overcome those who used "intimidation techniques" on you?
- ☐ Practice silence. Examine what develops in the noise voids. What happened what you used less words (filler) and more silence?

For Confidence:

- ☐ Get busy! Talk less about what you're going to do; just go do it. What happen when you walked the talk? What were others' responses?
- ☐ Keep track of what you get done over 3 weeks. Compare the number and scope of successful completions from week 1 to 2 to 3.
- ☐ Figure out when a "yes" is really a "yes" and when it's something else. Act on reality.

For Risk Taking:

- ☐ Crank up your energy and output. Don't worry about telling other people how terrific you are—show 'em! How have you cranked up your energy and output?
- ☐ If your project gets the great idea (but not a priority decision), set it aside to work on live projects. Channel and direct power, not waste it. Don't take it personal. What project did you set aside? Why? How were you able to redirect your energy into a "live" project?

Strategy NINE: Lose the Excuses

"While you're saving your face, you're losing you're a&%" - President Lyndon Johnson

BACKBONE EXERCISES

For Competence:

- ☐ Pay attention to what's going on around you. Listen to the litany of excuses, and note who spouts them.
- ☐ Where projects routinely jump track, see if excuses mask correctible mistakes. If so, how did you help correct the mistake to keep a project on track?
- ☐ Become aware of your own excuse-making and the situations that tempt you to whine. What excuses do I make? What situations make me whine?

For Confidence:

- ☐ Stop yourself in mid-whine
- ☐ Stay away from people who are habitual excuse makers. Hang around with people who find ways to get the job done.

For Risk Taking:

- ☐ Ask a "grumbler" to stop complaining and help you work on finding a solution. How did you approach the grumbler? What were the results? What was the impact?
- ☐ Walk away from people who make excuses for not succeeding. By refusing to endorse their behavior, you'll heighten your own awareness of how irresponsible it is and support your efforts to avoid the behavior.
- ☐ Challenge an excuse that is made to you. Say you won't accept it as an answer and wait for a more responsible reply.

Strategy TEN: Describe What You Think and Say So

"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage." - Anais Nin

BACKBONE EXERCISES

For Competence:

- ☐ Practice deciding what you think. Read a newspaper article. Decide what the main point of the piece is, and ask yourself, what do you think? See if you agree to disagree, and practice outlining why.

For Confidence:

- ☐ Trade thoughts with others. After you decide what you think, share your decision. Watch the reaction.
- ☐ Take an opposing stance once in a while to practice your decision making skills.

For Risk Taking:

- ☐ Introduce a controversial nonworking topic (i.e. sports) and say what you've decided about the subject.
- ☐ Dare to say, "I've decided this" about something. Be prepared to summarize how you got to your conclusion and what you considered along the way.
- ☐ Walk around to the other side of the table. Take a look at the evidence from that perspective, and see how it influences your thinking. If you decide something different from each side of the table, you've got more thinking to do!

We hope you have found this resource and the video helpful. Please write what you will *start*, *stop*, and *continue* doing as a result of this program.