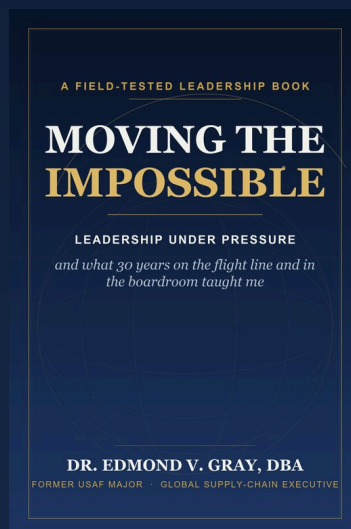


25 LESSONS

# From 30 Years of Leading Under Pressure

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Moving the Impossible



A companion to the book

# Before you start

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Twenty-five hard-earned lessons from thirty years of leading where failure had real consequences. Not universal laws — what held up.

## HOW TO USE THIS

- Skim the bold lines first; they are the lessons in one breath.
- Sit with the two bullets under any lesson that stings a little.
- If one changes what you do on Monday, it has done its job.

- 01 The truth has a shelf life. Tell it early.**
  - Early honesty costs less than late honesty — and far less than spin.
  - Risks named early become plans; named late, they become crises.
- 02 The mission and the people are not in competition.**
  - The best mission results come from the best-developed people.
  - Invest in your people as if the mission depends on them — it does.
- 03 Process improvement is culture change in disguise.**
  - Mapping and redesign are necessary but never sufficient.
  - Lasting gains come from the behavior and accountability shifts.
- 04 Silence is data.**
  - The topic everyone avoids is usually the real issue.
  - Learn to hear what the absence of information is telling you.
- 05 Credentials open doors; character decides what happens next.**
  - Degrees and certifications open doors character must walk through.
  - Pursue credentials — but never mistake them for substance.
- 06 Build relationships before you need them.**
  - Relationship capital has to exist before the need arises.
  - Invest generously, with no specific return in mind.
- 07 In a crisis, the leader's emotional state is the key variable.**
  - Teams take their emotional cue from the leader.
  - Calm creates calm; anxiety creates anxiety.
- 08 Hire for judgment first, skill second.**
  - Skills can be taught; judgment is slow to build.
  - Sound reasoning under pressure beats an impressive résumé.

- 09 The most expensive words are “that’s not my job.”**
- High performers act on problems beyond their formal scope.
  - Protecting that norm is a leader’s highest-value work.
- 10 Every barrier you clear for your team compounds.**
- Approval drag, silos, and legacy systems quietly tax performance.
  - Removing friction is a strategic investment, not a favor.
- 11 Your questions matter more than your answers.**
- The best leaders reframe problems and surface hidden assumptions.
  - Develop your questions as deliberately as your analysis.
- 12 Follow-through is the most underrated capability.**
- Every kept commitment builds trust; every broken one spends it.
  - The most trusted leaders are the most reliable, not the most brilliant.
- 13 Feedback in private is a gift; in public, a penalty.**
- Public correction damages dignity and team safety.
  - Hard conversations private; recognition public.
- 14 A team’s first ethical failure reveals its real values.**
- Values are proven under pressure, not in policy documents.
  - Transparency builds integrity; spin builds cynicism.
- 15 The meeting after the meeting is where decisions get made.**
- Informal conversations shape formal outcomes.
  - Invest in pre-alignment and post-meeting processing.
- 16 Overplanning is risk avoidance disguised as rigor.**
- Perfect, detailed plans fail on first contact with reality.
  - Build adaptive capacity, not more analytical precision.

- 17 The best development is disguised as the hardest assignment.**
- The most formative roles are the ones you doubt you are ready for.
  - Discomfort is the signal, not the warning.
- 18 Managing politics is a skill, not a moral failure.**
- Political intelligence is operational intelligence, not manipulation.
  - Engage transparently, for the organization's interest, not your own.
- 19 The best organizational changes become invisible.**
- Success is when the new way is simply "how we do things."
  - Embedding takes more leadership after launch than before.
- 20 Your team is watching what you do, not what you say.**
- Consistent behavior defines culture more than any statement.
  - Aligned behavior builds trust; contradiction builds cynicism.
- 21 Name what you don't know as readily as what you do.**
- False certainty makes worse decisions and loses trust fast.
  - Honesty about uncertainty is a competitive advantage.
- 22 Your network is a leadership capability, not a personal asset.**
- Networks supply intelligence, perspective, resources, and credibility.
  - Invest in the relationships, and they will be there when needed.
- 23 Organizations perform at the level of what they tolerate.**
- The real standard is the lowest performance allowed without consequence.
  - Raising performance means raising the threshold for consequences.
- 24 The people closest to the problem hold the best information.**
- Frontline operators often know the real bottleneck.
  - Create access for those voices and your decisions improve.

## **25 The best investment is in your own growth as a person.**

- Self-awareness, empathy, and ethical depth outlast any framework.
- Growing as a human being is the ultimate source of leadership impact.

THERE IS MORE WHERE THIS CAME FROM

# Moving the Impossible

Leadership Under Pressure

These twenty-five lessons are one chapter. The book is the whole of it — twenty-three chapters on leading real people through real pressure, drawn from thirty years in demanding environments.

[Get the book on Amazon](#)

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