Math to Success

This book pushes a lot of creativity and unusual prompts. This is intentional but it can also be a bit intimidating and uncomfortable for those who may not naturally lean into creative or artistic exercises. But, not to worry! Here is an exercise that may appeal to those of you looking for something a little less intangible and bit more straight forward.

Take a moment and solve these math problems:

6 + 4 =	
1 + 9 =	
5 + 5 =	
2 x 5 =	
$\lim\limits_{x \to 0} \dfrac{e^x - 1}{x} \times \left(\sum\limits_{k=0}^{\infty} \left(\dfrac{7}{8} \right)^k - (\cos^2 x + \sin^2 x) \right) + -3e^{\pi i}$ =	
2.2 + 4.1 + 3.3 + 0.4 =	

You may have picked up on a pattern here: all the answers (yes, even that one) are 10.

Math is often talked about as a "universal language" that provides precise solutions to precise problems. Unlike language, which can vary greatly even between similar dialects and cultures, math is always math – even the complicated bits. But even in this most precise of languages, you can find unique variety and application.

The above exercise demonstrates this: There are almost infinite ways to write a math equation where the answer is 10. Some may seem easier than others, but each equation is valid and works for specific or unique situations. Leadership is like these math equations: There are infinite paths for you to take to be a leader. Not every path will feel "right" 100% of the time, but the more you experience, expose yourself to or try, the more options you have to continue growing. This chapter covers some of the different ideas and techniques that may help you solve for x in your own leadership equations:

GIGO:

If you opened up a random AI generator and in the "prompt" section typed *alsj nfawuipv gobw*, what would you expect to be returned? Probably just complete nonsense, if not just outright errors.

GIGO is a computer science concept that flawed input information leads to flawed output information: **G**arbage **I**n, **G**arbage **O**ut. You may also have heard similar terms like RIRO (**R**ubbish) or SISO. The same concept can be applied to leadership (and nearly anything else, truthfully): if you input garbage, don't be surprised when the output is also garbage.

The input/output machine that is your brain works the same way: you cannot expect to get valid conclusions from a computer after inserting nonsense data any more than you can expect to get valid thoughts and insights if all you ever expose yourself to is non-sense or meaningless information. What might you be spending time on in these different areas that may be giving you GIGO results? Fill in the image:

Reading

_____

Watching

_____

Listening to

_____

Spending Time on

_____

INPUT / OUPUT MACHINE
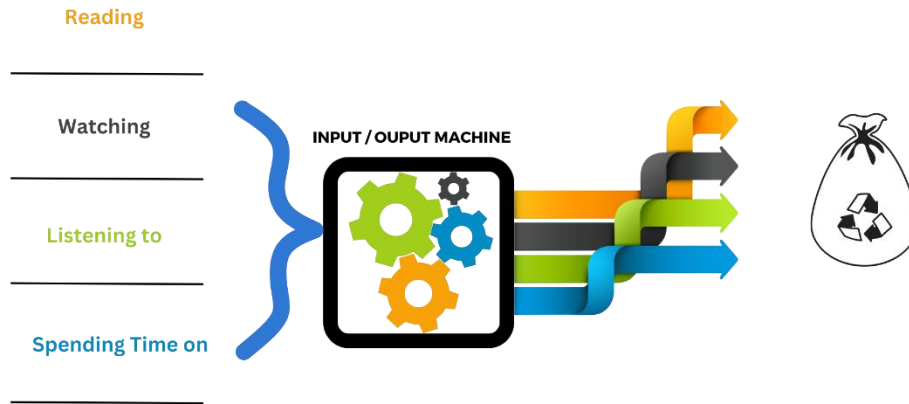
No one is saying to forever give up reality TV, daytime game shows or werewolf romances. Trust me… I love a good faerie-prince story just as much as the next person when I am relaxing or need a break, but I also endeavor to expose myself to other positive and thought provoking media as well. Inputting these kinds of things – books on self-improvement or learning, podcasts on current events and topics, TED talks, engaging with other motivated people or opportunities… this turns the GIGO machine into something much better: the QIQO machine. **Q**uality **I**n, **Q**uality **O**ut.

What ways are you, or could you, be spending time on in these different areas that may give you QIQO results? Fill in the image below:

Reading

_____

Watching

_____

Listening to

_____

Spending Time on

_____

INPUT / OUPUT MACHINE
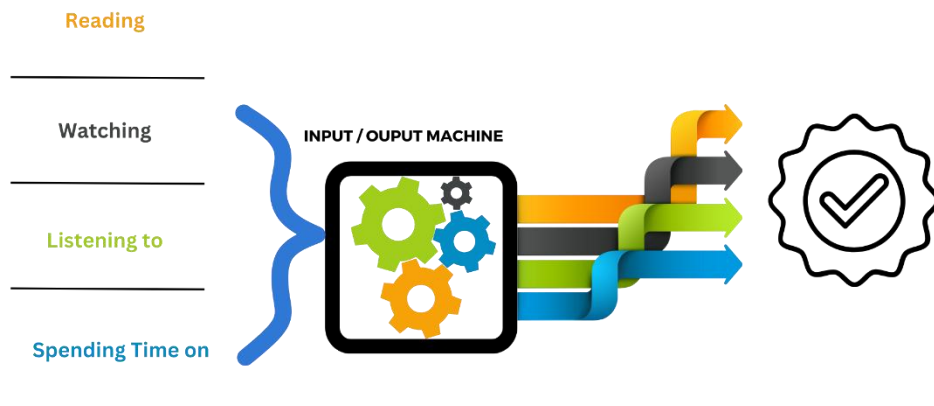
Pokeiken

If you were a kid in the 1990's or have spent literally any time since 2016 with even a passing engagement with current pop culture, you are familiar with the phenomenon that is the Pokémon Franchise. In the games, the goal is to explore an area and collect the creatures (Pokémon) that you encounter. The name Pokémon is actually a portmanteau – a blending of sounds and meanings. Some examples would be *e-mail* (electronic + mail), *hangry* (hungry + angry) and *chillax* (chill + relax). For Pokémon, the portmanteau is a combination of the words "pocket" (in Japanese: poketto) + monster (in Japanese: monsuta).

In this spirit, I recommend your own version of the collect-them-all theme: pokeiken! This portmanteau is a combination of the words "pocket" (in Japanese: poketto) and "experience" (in Japanese: keiken). Pocket experiences! Feel free to embrace your own creativity here and rename this to whatever you like, but the mental image of having adventures and learning from them is something deeply entrenched in my millennial psyche thanks to countless after school specials and early 2000s movies. Since it sounds similar, it's also easy to substitute the word into the theme song, and how can you resist that?

Just like building your QIQO machine, Pokeiken is about seeking out "pocket" (small) experiences that provide enrichment. Kouzes and Posner, who used years of empirical research to develop their Transformational Leadership model and author several practical guides and books on leadership agree on this point: Leadership development requires deliberate decision and action. (2018) It doesn't *just happen*, you need to be willing to make it happen. That doesn't mean you need to fly around the world and experience other cultures (though you certainly could) or spend your life savings on conferences and generationally defining concerts (though, again…you certainly could). It's about having a *growth mindset* for the little things *and* the big ones. Having a growth mindset is a keystone to

leadership development, and one way to develop that is to embrace learning opportunities and new ideas. It is exceptionally challenging to sit alone and pull new ideas directly from the ether. It is much more attainable to expose yourself to new things and find inspiration from them.

Let's try this out: Imagine yourself at the gym. Maybe the one in your office, a hotel, at home or just a generic gym somewhere. Imagine yourself stepping onto a treadmill and starting to run. Close your eyes. Really picture it for a few moments. In the activity space on the following page, write down what you see in your minds eye, what you experience. What might you be thinking? What interesting things are there you might see? What are you feeling, hearing, saying or doing?

Now, imagine yourself going for a run outside. Maybe a trail, or a running path. Possibly along a beach, or your neighborhood. It doesn't matter where, just so long as you picture yourself someplace you could actually run. Maybe you pop in some headphones during your run or are imagining yourself in a race. Close your eyes again and picture it for a few moments. Now, in the activity below, write down what you see in your mind's eye, what you experience. What might you be thinking? What interesting things are there you might see? What are you feeling, hearing, saying, or doing?

Hopefully, one of these images was able to provide far more engagement and interest. If not, take this exercise out of the book: Hop on a treadmill at your location of choice, or just in your own space do a few stretches and jumping jacks for 5 minutes. Write down what you observed around you after you do. Then, repeat your 5 minute exercise outdoors: your yard is a great location, or a nearby park. After 5 minutes in the outdoor space, write down what you observed around yourself. So long as you avoid doing this exercise in the dark of night, there should be pretty clear results (though who knows what you might see even in the late hours!)

Pokeiken
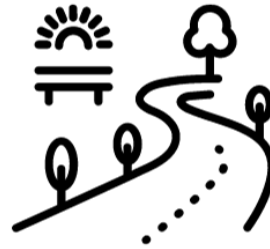
Reflection:

Both the "treadmill" and the "running path" visualizations allowed you to experience the exercise in your minds eye. However, one provided much greater opportunity to stretch your imagination. In what ways in your real life could you give yourself the same opportunity of having a "pocket experience"? It doesn't have to be a big thing like a trip to a foreign country – it could be as small as taking a walk down the hallway of your office.

Do you notice a pattern in your different imaginings? If I were to fill this out, it would look a bit like this:

I see the wall in front of me. Its cream colored
with nothing on it.
I feel a fan blowing on my face
I hear the sound of my feet on the treadmill.
I feel sweaty and tired.

I see a winding road through a forest thats
brightly colorful because its fall.
The air is crisp and smells like autumn.
I say hello to other people on the path, and stop to
pet any dogs that are on walks.
I hear birds and see squirrels scampering, I may
even see a deer...
Etc...

When I think about limiting myself to the indoor treadmill, although I am getting exercise, there is little to inspire me or even distract me from my general dislike of running. When I think about running outside, I have a lot more inspiration surrounding me. There are animals, people, I could be running "towards" something, so many things. This is what seeking pocket experiences can provide you: a new perspective, an unexpected inspiration, a mental break. A pocket experience isn't something big because you don't need to wait for something big to inspire you. Maybe its lunch with coworkers or dinner with friends. It could be a walk in the park or going to a local event. This book can be a pocket experience. When you practice an openness to learning and experiencing small things, you'll do it automatically with the big things as well, and will be open to inspiration and growth whenever it comes.

Does collecting pocket experiences really work? Nintendo's game director, Shigeru Miyamoto would likely agree that it does. As game director for Nintendo, Miyamoto is responsible for some of the most popular and groundbreaking video games of all time. If you have heard of the Mario Brothers, Donkey Kong or The Legend of Zelda, then you are familiar with his work. In an interview with NPR in February of 2023, Miyamoto attributes a lot of his inspiration as coming from his childhood experiences in nature. When people ask for his advise on how to become a game designer like him, his suggestion isn't to attend art school or log a thousand hours of game time on the game system of choice: instead, he always tells people *if it's really nice outside, you should go play outside.* It's the combination of personal experience with technology that creates lasting, enjoyable games. (NPR, 2023)

Other pocket experiences that have inspired famous people?

- **Igor Stravinsky,** one of the most influential composers of the 20th century whose works include *The Rites of Spring* and *The Firebird,* would routinely do headstands as a way to overcome creative blocks.

- **Salvador Dali**, famous for his surreal paintings and pithy sayings, is also famous for his short afternoon naps with a key. He would sit in a chair holding a heavy key above a metal plate. When he dozed off, the key would fall and make a loud sound against the plate waking him up. This allowed him to connect to his subconscious in that "place between waking and dreaming" and capture the unique and dreamlike absurdities he is famous for. This has strong scientific backing: the period of time when we first fall asleep is called the hypnagogic sleep state, and is thought to be where the mind brings together ideas in often unexpected ways.

- **Steve Jobs,** who hardly needs an introduction thanks to his huge influence during our time, is a well known thought leader and creative mind. Being a man of vision comes with a lot of stress, and in his authorized biography he shares one of his favorite stress relievers during the early days of Apple Computers: He would soak his bare feet in the cold water of company toilets to reduce stress. Cold baths (including foot baths) can help induce relaxation and decrease stress, allowing greater creative thought and the removal of mental blocks. There is no requirement, however, for these cold baths to be in toilet water.

- **Theodor Geisel** – better known as Doctor Seuss – would wear hats to inspire thoughts. He had a closet with hundreds of hats collected over a span of 60 years, and would try on new and interesting hats as a way to inspire himself. Oddly enough, this is a phenomenon known as *enclothed cognition*: what we wear affects our psychology. Embodied cognition experts Adam and Galinsky have conducted several studies on the affect of clothing on performance proving the phenomenon: In one study, participants wearing a white lab coat (doctors coat) made half
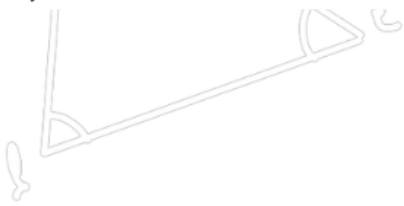
as many errors as their counter parts in street clothes taking a test. In another test, participants were given an identical white lab jacket. Half were told it was a doctor's coat, the other half were told it was a painter's coat. Both groups were then asked to find minor differences between similar pictures. The 'doctor's coat' participants performed better than their counter parts, demonstrating heightened attention (2012). Who knew clothes could be so impactful?

- Another writer with an interesting technique to opening herself up to intuition was **Agatha Christie**, who enjoyed sitting, undisturbed, in a bath thinking and eating apples to work through the plots of her famous who dunnits.

- Walking has been found to be a reliable way of opening up the mind for the free-flow of ideas and increased creativity, but **Nikolai Tesla** took this to an unusual place by curling the toes on each foot 100 times before bed each night. The next time you can't get away from a meeting or conference call but still need some space for inspiration, perhaps sliding off your shoes for some under desk toe curling may be in order?

None of these famous figures above did anything that was particularly big or extremely difficult. They did some weird stuff – I do not recommend using your office toilet as a spa – but these small moments gave them the opportunity to create small pockets of experience that influenced them in different ways. Some of your pocket experiences may influence you in a moment, like a bolt of lightning. Others pocket experiences, like Shigeru Miyamoto's childhood hikes and explorations, may not show up as inspiration until later. You won't know what inspires you and your own leadership journey unless you get out of your box and start collecting your own Pokeiken!
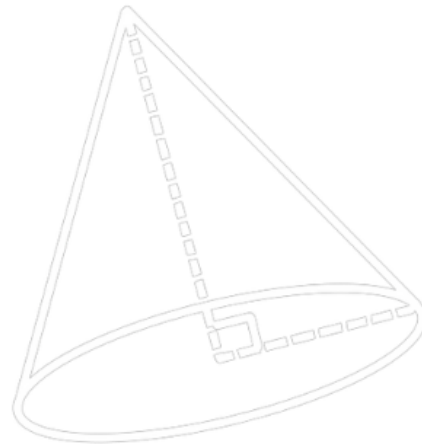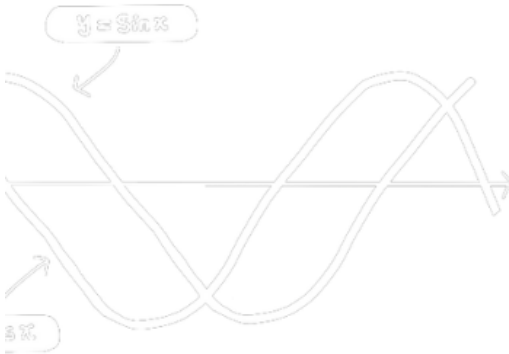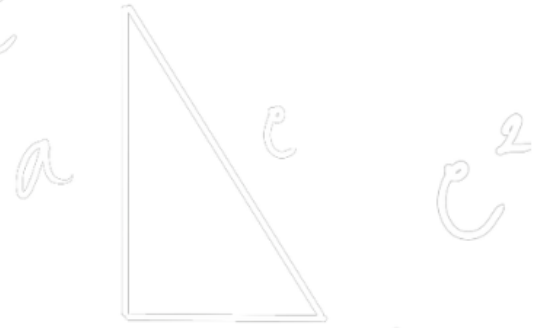
Reflection:

Is there a place where you feel "stuck" because the path seems too challenging or too far out of reach? Maybe it just seems impossible. Is there a different "way to get to 10" you haven't considered?
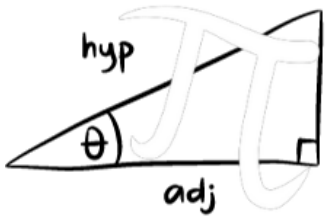
$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

$$\log x = \frac{1}{x \log a}$$

$$= a^2 + b^2$$

$$y = \sin x$$

$$V = \frac{1}{3} \pi r^2 \cdot h$$

$$D = b^2 - 4ac$$

$$\sin 2\alpha = 2\sin\alpha \cos\alpha$$

$$3.14159265358...$$

$$i = \sqrt{-1}$$

$$y = mx$$

$$Ax = by + C = 0$$

hyp

opp

θ

adj

$$\sin(\theta) = \frac{opp}{hyp}$$
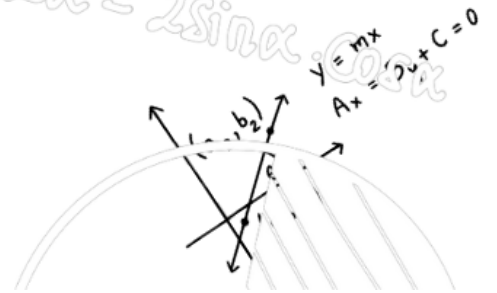
Reflection:

Here are a few "pockets" for you to fill with your own ideas for potential Pokeiken experiences! It may be as small as taking a walk at lunch time, as large as a trip to another country or a museum, or as weird as putting your feet in a toilet bowl. The choices are yours!