



VIP

VIBRANCY IMPACT PROFESSIONALISM



GEOPROFESSIONAL
BUSINESS
ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL CONFERENCE
APRIL 23-25, 2026

SHERATON GRAND AT WILD HORSE PASS
PHOENIX, ARIZONA



Stop Managing, Start Leading

What 500+ Years of GeoHero Experience Reveals



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GeoHeroes Podcast Origins





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Researching What Makes Successful GeoHereos - Successful?

26

In-Depth Interview

500+

Years Experience

AI

Pattern Analysis



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Human Synthesis

Traditional qualitative research capturing the nuance of personal stories and mentorship dynamics.



AI Detection

Pattern recognition and frequency analysis across 26 transcripts to find unspoken commonalities.



Top 5 Insights

Selection of the most frequent and actionable leadership traits found across the industry spectrum.



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Insight #1: Nobody Had a Plan



I thought about being a lawyer... It wasn't till my junior year in college where I finally learned sort of what [my dad] was doing every day. – Mark Kramer



I was laid off in August 1982. Within two weeks I had managed to find another gig... as luck would have it. – Jay Martin



I was driving home one day and a civil engineering firm had a job. They were looking for somebody to do dispatch for their construction materials testing group. And I thought, well, I'm a dispatcher. If you've dispatched once, you can learn to dispatch somewhere else. – Elizabeth Clark

What This Means:

- ✓ Success isn't about perfect planning.
- ✓ It's preparation meeting timing.
- ✓ The "Reluctant Leader" phenomenon.



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Insight #1: Nobody Had a Plan Actionable Steps



Keep challenging yourself. Keep meeting new people.
Keep learning. Don't ever stop. – Charlie Head



Moving around a lot was actually a good thing... it kind
of taught me to roll with the punches, get comfortable
in uncomfortable situations. – Kent Bannister



Little things happen at points in our lives... jump in and
take advantage. – Stewart Osgood

Do This Now:

- ★ Focus on doing your current work exceptionally well
- ⚡ Stay alert to opportunities
- + Say “yes” more often than “no”
- 🔨 Build skills and relationships, not titles



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Insight #2: Commitment Over Charisma



When I started hand delivering those reports and making the connections... that connection really started to take off for me. – Matt Moler



Finding where need and opportunity meet. Are we finding out what our client's needs are?... people who are best at that are at heart problem solvers. – Laura Register

The Pattern:

- ✓ Reliability builds trust.
- ✓ Trust opens doors.
- ✓ Small commitments, consistently kept.
- ✓ Doing what you say you'll do



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Insight #2: Commitment Over Charisma Actionable Steps







We need to be able to have that conversation with you as a stakeholder... we want to give you those answers, but we need to be able to find some kind of common language.— Teresa Peterson



Just really basic stuff that they don't always teach in school... communication, relationships are really the foundation of success. – Leo Titus

Do This Now:

-  Communicate proactively, before asked
-  Under-promise, over-deliver
-  Address problems early and honestly
-  Build reputation as someone who delivers



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Insight #3: Task-Master → People-Leader



Engineers are very undervalued as managers and leaders... the number one profession of the Fortune 500 CEOs is engineering. – Rick Heckel



Building your soft people skills is very important. Being able to interact today... being able to go up to people and talk to them and build a relationship is important.
– Grace Blackburn

The Pattern:

- ✓ Early career: task-focused
- ✓ Mid career: technical excellence alone has limits
- ✓ Later career: people-focused, empathy-driven.



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Insight #3: Task-Master → People-Leader Actionable Steps → Empathy Discovery



Number one was my father... Number two, Dr. Rad Squier, my first boss... But the younger generation friends you have, you would learn tremendously from them.— Saiid Behboodi







If you get into an organization and they don't have a mentoring program, or you're not assigned a mentor, find somebody that you respect and can learn from and attach yourself to them. – Dan Schaefer



I would hold onto an employee for too long that I thought was valuable... they were basically a cancer on the company. And it took me too long to realize that. – Rich Johnson

Do This Now:

-  Seeking mentorship and giving it back
-  Understanding employees are at different life stages
-  Learning from multiple generations - up and down
-  Seeing situations through others' eyes



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Insight #4: Relationships > Technology



We need to train ourselves to embrace... communication technology... but the core relationships remain central. – Vic Donald



The golden rule always applies and always will apply. Treat people around you how you wanna be treated, whether they're a technician that's three notches down the totem pole from you or the CEO of the company who's three notches above you on the totem pole. Treat people well. – Steve Wendland

The Pattern:

- ✓ Technology keeps changing
- ✓ Tools Evolve continuously.
- ✓ Relationships remain the foundation.



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Insight #4: Relationships > Technology Actionable Steps → Communication Skills



The value is there, yet communication is never mentioned. We address the global changes and challenges in the work that we do. We're forward thinking. – Eilizabeth Clark







Realistically, communication doesn't come supernaturally to a lot of engineers. And so I think it's an area that we all need to work on. – Joel Carson



You have to treat everybody differently. You have to try to understand — go back to Covey — seek first to understand. What motivates Guy is going to be different than what motivates Ed, and how to talk to Guy is going to be different than how to talk to Ed.. – Ed Alizadeh

The Common Journey:

-  Initial struggle with communication
-  Receiving honest feedback
-  Seek training or mentorship
-  Deliberate practice over years
-  Eventually become effective communicators



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Insight #5: Get Involved, Give Back



You can't call yourself a professional unless you dedicate yourself to community service... Never waste a relationship. It gives back to you far more than you'll ever give to it. – Kurt Fraese



I want to make the profession better. I feel strongly about that... that's one of the main reasons I wanted to go to GBA and become very involved. – Tom Blackburn



If I would give some to GBA, I would get two, three, sometimes tenfold back in relationships and information. – Matt Moler

The Pattern:

- ✓ Community service beyond the profession
- ✓ Active participation, not passive attendance
- ✓ The return on investment exceeds what you give



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Insight #5: Get Involved, Give Back Actionable Steps → Beyond Networking



You get out of it what you put into it. Keep challenging yourself. Keep meeting new people. Keep learning. Don't ever stop. – Charlie Head



Get involved. Your career, whatever you choose it to be, is of your making. You get out of it what you put into it. There are lots of associations out there that are going to help you achieve. – Teresa Peterson

Instead of This:

- ✗ Collecting business cards at events
- ✗ Attending meetings passively
- ✗ Showing up just for PDH credits

Do This:

- ✓ Join committees, get on boards
- ✓ Volunteer for hard assignments
- ✓ Learn to lead without formal authority



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BONUS Insight: Learning from Discomfort



If you want to grow... you have to be uncomfortable all the time. And if you find yourself in a position where you're not uncomfortable and you want to be growing, then you have to find your way into a new position.

– Jesse Kropelnicki



Don't shy away from difficult situations... whenever we've had a difficult situation here at work, we've learned something incredibly valuable and almost always have created a fantastic client for life.

– Carrie Rodriguez



Nothing in life is easy. There are a lot of hardships... you just have to persevere. Even when people don't believe, you have to do your best. – Tom Blackburn

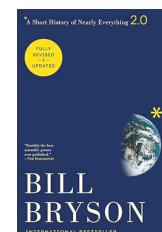
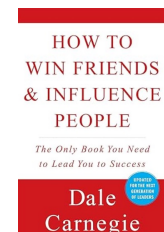
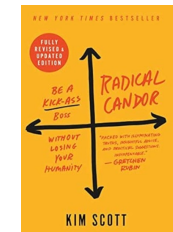
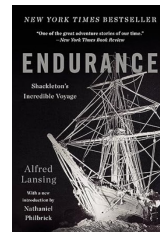
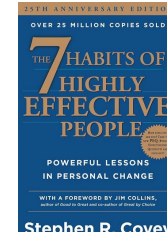
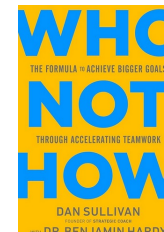
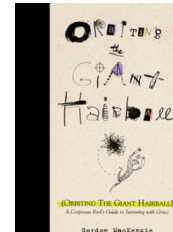
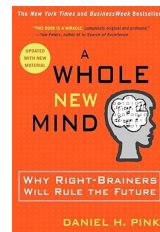
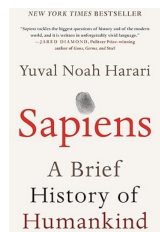
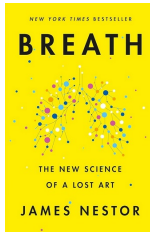
The Wisdom:

- ✓ Growth happens in discomfort
- ✓ Mistakes are tuition payments, not failures
- ✓ The hard times teach more than the easy times



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GeoHeroes Book Recommendations





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Summary - The Five Forces

1. **No Grand Plan** - Preparation + Opportunity
2. **Reliable Execution** - Do what you say
3. **People Evolution** - Task-master → People-leader
4. **Relationship Focus** - Communication is core
5. **Active Involvement** - Give back, grow yourself

BONUS: Embrace Discomfort – Growth requires it



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You Too Can Be A GeoHero!

What They Did:

- Stumbled into careers
- Made mistakes (often big ones)
- Learned slowly and painfully
- Kept showing up
- Helped others along the way

You Can:

- Start where you are right now
- Do what's in front of you exceptionally well
- Build genuine relationships
- Get uncomfortable and grow
- Give back to your community



Exploring Interest – GeoHeroes S2





In Memory of David Lourie



April 6, 1956 – February 11, 2026



Q&A

Questions?



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