

Moonshot: Taking Bold Action in Times of Crisis

Reevaluate Title

Know Your Why

"Why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? . . . We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win." *What Determination & Fearlessness*

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

This is what greatness is about

This Book Must Be Read Awesome

Sixteen days after July 4th I was still celebrating attempting to light leftover fireworks in the middle of the day. This was nine days before my birthday, a Sunday, July 20, 1969, the day man landed on the moon.

My mom called to me in the backyard at approximately 3:00pm Central Time, which is 4:00pm Eastern Time, [seventeen minutes before Apollo 11 was to land on the moon](#). She wanted me to come into the house to watch the moon landing, but I resisted.

Those fireworks, which were supposed to have been off limits were procured with what my parents considered precociousness, in this case, my clandestine efforts as a 7-year-old, so *D. & A. hot at This #Uhh* when faced with the choice between the Moon Landing or an opportunity to defy parental safety guidance, Apollo 11 was losing.

The next request from my mom came with an authoritative urgency, backed up by my dad, a baseball player, who gave me the glance of a pitcher on the mound daring the runner to take his foot off the base.

Peer pressure increased the odds of penalty in those 17 minutes before Apollo 11 would land as my obedient sisters assembled with my mom, dad, and grandmother to watch the historic moment on television.

At almost 8 years old my increasing maturity helped me conclude life would be more pleasant if I obediently entered the house, sat down, and watched this event so important to my parents.

My memory of the moon landing is clear because of my resistance, and the fear my grandmother stirred in me when she questioned whether God wanted man landing on the moon.

While I worried we were ^{True} about to experience the apocalypse, the volume on the television increased, drowning out all distractions as I listened, watched, and experienced the monumental human accomplishment of landing on the moon for the next several hours, then there were those words, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

At 10:56 p.m. EDT Armstrong is ready to plant the first human foot on another world. With more than half a billion people watching on television, he climbs down the ladder and proclaims: "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." ([Play Audio](#))

[July 20, 1969: One Giant Leap For Mankind](#)

World population has grown but still
500,000,000
|
more than current U.S.
329,000,000

This extraordinary moment in history occurred because of the Presidential leadership of John F. Kennedy who decided to take a "Moonshot," bold action in a time of crisis. We can learn from him, ^① how he changed the world, ^② ushering in a technological age of discovery resulting in a globally interconnected, integrated, and interdependent world where ^③ the quality of life for

significant numbers of people has been radically changed since July 20, 1969, when little kids like me left their backyards to witness a "Moonshot" whose impact continues to reverberate today.

Oh The Possibilities → If We Can Find The Courage
Radical Change Changes The World

See the Danger and Opportunity

When written in Chinese, the word "crisis" is composed of two characters - one represents danger and one represents opportunity.

President John F. Kennedy
Remarks at the Convocation of the United Negro College Fund,
Indianapolis, Indiana
April 12, 1959

President John F. Kennedy was [a visionary leader] whose [skill in navigating crisis] arose from his ability to not only see danger but opportunity as well. This skill is one each of us must develop if we hope to successfully manage the Covid-19 crisis. My conversations with countless

individuals and leaders have revealed one common Covid-19 experience, which is this crisis like

all crises creates [entangling negativity loops.] *Pandemic Negativity* — we don't always know we are in it

These negativity loops occur when we attempt to move forward toward the opportunities, then someone inserts "a word for the wise," which is actually negativity cloaked

in fear made to sound insightful about the dangers. People who use and promote fear motivated

+ 2 = Spread Negativity Through language
negative language are not demonstrating wisdom about the dangers, but a resistance to the change necessary to take advantage of the opportunities.
negativity can often be resistance in disguise

Leading in a time of crisis requires the balance of seeing the danger without missing the opportunity. Every family, community, and organization will have people whose fear blinds them

to the opportunities keeping them myopically focused on dangers alone. These same organizations will have people whose fear causes them to ignore and deny the existence of dangers keeping them myopically focused on opportunities alone.
Balance, Temperate } *Not Emotionalism*

President Kennedy possessed the balance to see the dangers and opportunities. He exercised the honesty and courage necessary to face the danger without abandoning the faith and vision necessary to see the opportunity.

Crisis makes us abandon our Faith and Vision

The Cold War was the central conflict and source of crisis during the Kennedy presidency, it was the cultural and geopolitical struggle for primacy between Communist and Democratic nations. This was the crisis to which Kennedy referred in his [remarks at the convocation of the United Negro College Fund](#).

The danger signs are all around us. With less than half our productive capacity the Soviet Union has at least equalled us in several crucial areas of military science and technology. Since World War II a devastated Russia has rebuilt its factories, harnessed its rivers and regimented its manpower in such a way as to challenge us in many fields of science and technology where we were for so long supreme. Sputnik is a symbol - the symbol of Soviet concentration on scientific education and development - at the expense, it is true, of the immediate needs of the Russian people.

This conflict from 1959 might seem so distant as to be inapplicable, but when we consider the recent [Cybersecurity breaches](#) from both [China](#) and [Russia](#), the recent statement from the incoming [Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#) who said, ““As we look at China, there is no doubt that it poses the most significant challenge of any nation state to the United States,” then it is easy to see history repeating itself.

[9] What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. [10] Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.

[Ecclesiastes 1:9-10 NIV](#)

The book of Ecclesiastes teaches us that the world doesn't change, it modernizes even progresses, but the fundamental nature of life remains the same. There is nothing new under the sun.

Love, Hope, Pain, Suffering, Success, Failure etc. = our humanity remains

Despite the fact that we are living in a globally interconnected, integrated, and interdependent world we as human beings will continue to face crisis and create conflict. For precisely this reason, we should study and learn from leaders like President John F. Kennedy. He saw the danger, but it did not so overwhelm him that he missed the opportunity.

the same

Along with danger, crisis is represented by opportunity. The space age offers the opportunity for new voyages of discovery. Atomic energy and automation can mean the opportunity for unprecedented abundance. Modern science and technology make it possible for poverty to be abolished everywhere in the world. New developments in means of transportation and communication offer the opportunity to extend the principles on which we based our republic to all mankind.

[President Kennedy, Remarks at the Convocation of the United Negro College Fund](#)

President Kennedy saw the danger of the Soviet Union and the opportunity of the Space Age. He allowed the danger of an increasingly powerful Soviet Union with their oppressive form of communism to motivate him to seize the opportunity of the Space Age to spread the freedom of Democracy.

As Lincoln said, the Declaration of Independence "gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world." It "gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance." Never before have we had so excellent an opportunity to fulfill that promise of an equal chance.

[President Kennedy, Remarks at the Convocation of the United Negro College Fund](#)

He is relentless
in repetition
opportunity,
opportunity,
etc.
etc.

What can we learn from President Kennedy? When faced with danger, Kennedy

responded with courage. Instead of becoming entangled in and imprisoned by his fear of danger, he broke free by ^①exercising faith, ^②seeing the vision, and ^③seizing the opportunity.

How do we respond?

3 simple steps... that are hard

Courage, Character, and the Crucible

Courage is the virtue that President Kennedy most admired.

[Robert F. Kennedy, Foreword to Profiles in Courage](#)

Courage is a quality of character rare in any age. Perhaps this is why in 1956 then Senator Kennedy studied courage and published his Pulitzer Prize winning work "[Profiles in Courage](#)," for which his brother Robert F. Kennedy wrote the forward noting his brother's admiration for the courageous.

"One man with courage makes a majority," are the words of Andrew Jackson used by Robert F. Kennedy in the forward to "Profiles of Courage" to describe his brother John. He points out that, "At least one half of the days that he spent on this earth were days of intense physical pain." Every historical text covering the life and presidency of John F. Kennedy supports this statement as well as the well-known family joke about him.

When we were growing up together we used to laugh about the great risk a mosquito took in biting Jack Kennedy—with some of his blood the mosquito was almost sure to die.

[Robert F. Kennedy, Foreword to Profiles in Courage](#)

*I still laugh
at this
decade later*

This physical set of ailments doesn't even include the additional suffering he experienced as a consequence of his courageous leadership of the PT – 109 crew in World War II.

With Lieutenant Kennedy and the crew stealthily looking for a floating target in the channel, their boat was rammed by a Japanese destroyer. Ten seconds later, Kennedy's vessel had broken apart and was sinking fast. Two crew members had died. The PT-109 went up in flames.

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

Theoretical Courage → Novel Idea

[For many of us in leadership courage is a purely theoretical.] Something we have never actually done. We speak in quotes, scenarios, and with speculative hyperbole to cover up the fact that we have never actually stared threat or tragedy in the eye and come out on the other side

victorious because of our courage. This is why we must read about Kennedy and other great men so we might understand real courage.

Clinging to debris, Kennedy remained coolheaded in the shipwreck's aftermath. He saved the badly injured Patrick McMahon by pulling him in a three-hour swim to a small island a few miles away. Over the course of the next twelve hours, all the survivors miraculously made it there. Desperate to stay alive, Kennedy ordered his crew to swim to another island, where food and water were available. Thinking fast, Kennedy carved an SOS message in a coconut and handed it to two natives willing to row in a primitive boat seeking help for the marooned Americans.

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

The three-hour swim during which Kennedy pulled Patrick McMahon to safety would save his crew member but leave him with a severely limiting life-long back problem, and recognition for exceptional courage.

On August 8, six days after PT-109 was rammed, the badly sunburned surviving crew and their commander were rescued. Kennedy was welcomed back to the PT base as a full-fledged naval hero, earning the Navy and Marine Corps medals for leadership.

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

The lesson Kennedy would take away from the PT – 109 experience was not about his own courage but the collective courage necessary to meet and overcome a crisis.

"Most of the courage shown in the war came from men's understanding of their interdependence on each other," Kennedy would later reflect. "Men were saving other men's lives at the risk of their own simply because they realized that perhaps the next day their lives would be saved in turn. And so there was built up a great feeling of comradeship and fellowship, and loyalty."

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

Crisis
Strengthens
bonds

What I find fascinating about the life of President Kennedy is his capacity to navigate crisis was developed long before he became president, and that his courage was the quality of

character which made success possible, whether it was his personal health problems (which far exceed the account in these pages), or the life and death struggle of war.

Courage is too rarely discussed in our day, which is why we must read about and emulate people of courage if we want to survive and conquer crisis. Why are we so silent about courage today? When is the last time we evaluated our leadership based on our capacity for and demonstration of courage? How often do we seek out leaders of courage for positions of leadership in our organization or do we instead prefer the timid who are more ceremonial than serious?

How would you rate your organization if we were to measure it on the scale of being Novel Concept courage friendly? How welcoming is the culture of your organization to leaders who are guided by their conscience, principles, and convictions instead of the pressure they feel to be in constant alignment with popular opinion?

Pressure or Principle

The Young leader Challenge
Watching young leaders in the organizations where I lead as well as those I consult, the prevailing trend is for them to avoid leadership, not because they see the responsibility, but because they see the resistance, and know themselves well enough to understand they lack the desire and courage to handle the opposition and criticism necessary to lead. Consequently, the singular qualification for leadership is no longer based on who is best fit to lead, but what poor soul is naïve enough to sacrifice the quality of his or her life to take the job.

- Fewer people want to be in leadership?

Leadership is not only about the leader's ability to develop courage in the crucible of personal crisis, but it is also about the people in the organization and their willingness to value, respect, and encourage these leaders to be courageous, for without courage Kennedy would

never have taken his Moonshot, and without courage in our leaders the organizations of which we are a part will never take theirs.

There Are 11 ☺

10 Ways to Create, Launch, and Land your Moonshot

Books written by friends of John F. Kennedy are often devalued or ignored because they fail to record the unpleasantness of the Kennedy legacy. Surely some of this is because those friends were writing in the shadow of his assassination, but also because they wanted him to be remembered as they remembered him, in an inspiring light.

“Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye” is one of those books written by friends and counselors to President Kennedy. My reason for quoting from them is they reveal truths about Kennedy which are often ignored, like the fact that he was a man of faith, something made clear by this moment of spontaneous spiritual inspiration.

Dave and I were talking the other day about our exciting trip to Mexico with President Kennedy and Jackie in 1962 and its thrilling moment in the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe when Jackie approached the altar carrying red roses as an offering. We were watching the President as he watched Jackie, deeply moved by reverent emotion. When she handed the flowers to the Archbishop, the President blessed himself with the sign of the cross, and all of the thousands of people crowded into the huge church applauded. It was a rare show of his feelings with a gesture made impulsively, and meant to be private, and the sudden outburst of applause, which none of us had heard in a church before, embarrassed him.

[Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye, Kenneth O'Donnell, David F. Powers](#)

His friends, counselors, the writers Kenneth O'Donnell and David F. Powers go on to describe the sincerity of this spiritual moment.

The thought that he might be suspected of making a display of his religious faith before an admiring audience made him squirm. Nobody hated crowd-pleasing ploys or show-off antics more than John Kennedy. There was never another political celebrity who was as sincerely unpretentious or who took himself less seriously.] Clearly Friends Talking But Necessary Perspective

[Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye, Kenneth O'Donnell, David F. Powers](#)

Proof of faith reveals itself through the observations of his brother Robert F. Kennedy who described John's attitude about the painful and debilitating suffering he experienced because of his fragile health in this way.

But during all this time, I never heard him complain. I never heard him say anything that would indicate that he felt God had dealt with him unjustly. Those who knew him well would know he was suffering only because his face was a little whiter, the lines around his eyes were a little deeper, his words a little sharper. Those who did not know him well detected nothing.

[Robert F. Kennedy, Foreword to Profiles in Courage](#)

There is an assumption by many that President Kennedy was not a man of faith, but with him as with all of us faith is a complicated thing we exercise in some areas of our life while failing to exercise it in others.

John F. Kennedy exercised his faith as president of the United States something particularly clear when one assesses his faith, vision, and resulting determination to take the Moonshot that changed the world.

The following are 10 acts of faith we can distill from the record about his leadership into the new frontier of space where he led the United States to create, launch, and land the first and most profoundly transformative Moonshot.

1) Make a Decision

The most difficult thing is the decision to act. The rest is merely tenacity.
—AMELIA EARHART

This is one of two opening quotes to the book [American Moonshot](#) and it points out the importance of being decisive. How do we become decisive? We must have faith, vision, and courage. For this to happen, we must find a source of faith that gives us certainty in uncertain times, then we must use this faith to see the opportunity not merely the dangers in times of crisis, then finally we must allow this faith and vision to nurture and grow the courage necessary to not merely talk but act.

2) Don't Go It Alone

It will not be one man going to the moon . . . it will be an entire nation.
For all of us must work to put him there.
—PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY, MAY 25, 1961

This is the second of two opening quotes to the book [American Moonshot](#) and it points out the importance of working together rather than alone. The arrogant go it alone assuming the most valuable ingredient for success is themselves. The humble are grateful to have received a compelling vision but the magnitude of their quest makes them realize this possibility about which they dream cannot become a reality unless done with others instead of alone.

3) Be Committed To The Vision

Kennedy used the opportunity to drive home his brazen pledge of 1961, that the United States would place an astronaut on the moon by the decade's end. Scoffing at critics of Project Apollo (NASA's moonshot program) as being as thickheaded as those fools who laughed at the Wright brothers in 1903 before

the Kitty Hawk flights, he turned visionary. "Some of us may dimly perceive where we are going and may not feel this is of the greatest prestige to us," Kennedy said. "I am confident that its significance, its uses and benefits will become as obvious as the Sputnik satellite is to us, as the airplane is to us.

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

Wow!

Criticism is the greatest test of our commitment to the vision. Unless we develop a confidence impervious to the critic whose resistance and opposition can be withering, we will give up on our moonshots.

4) Get Comfortable with Risk

Only one top-tier Cold War politician had the audacity to risk America's budget and international prestige on such a wild-eyed feat within such a short time frame: in John F. Kennedy, the man and the hour had met. Even Kennedy's own national security advisor, McGeorge Bundy, thought the whole moonshot gambit scientifically reckless, politically risky, and a "grandstanding play" of the most outlandish kind; and he had the temerity to voice his opinion in no uncertain terms to the president. "You don't run for President in your forties," Kennedy snapped back, "unless you have a certain moxie."

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

Moxie is defined as "a force of character, determination, or nerve. Kennedy expresses his comfortability with risk when he answers McGeorge Bundy's withering critique of his Moonshot by saying, "You don't run for President in your forties unless you have a certain moxie."

Those who take moonshots must expect like Kennedy to be called "reckless," to be persistently warned about the embarrassing likelihood of failure, and to be accused of arrogant "grandstanding." Get comfortable with all of this if you want to create, launch, and land your moonshot.

5) Create a Culture that pursues Greatness

It's my contention that if JFK had been wired differently—if he hadn't had such a hard-driving father who raised him with the need to achieve great things or a brother who died in World War II trying to destroy a German missile facility—then the moonshot might not have happened.

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

The pursuit of greatness will produce what many will consider unreasonable expectations. What these people fail to understand is the reason greatness is so rare is precisely because of those expectations.

My personal experience in community, spiritual, and technology organizations has taught me that the only ones who take and eventually succeed in their moonshots are those who create a culture of greatness where mediocrity is resisted and excellence is desired.

Select Fearless People for Your Leadership Team

For Kennedy, who himself became a World War II naval hero for his bravery in the PT-109 incident of 1943 in the Pacific Theater, the Project Mercury astronauts were ultimately fearless public servants like him. The NASA astronauts Kennedy had fêted in the Collier Trophy ceremony weeks before his assassination volunteered for space travel duty at a pivotal moment in the Cold War. Like Kennedy, these astronauts were courageous, pragmatic, and cool; they were husbands and fathers who, as journalist James Reston noted, "talked of the heavens the way old explorers talked of the unknown sea."

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

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Moonshots require a leadership team with a shared faith, shared vision, and a shared sense of fearlessness in their determination to fulfill the dream. These are the types of people Kennedy looked for and bonded with, those without which he would not have been successful in turning his Moonshot into a lunar landing.

Finding fearless leaders is not easy. This type of leader usually has a deep and unshakeable source of faith which makes them capable of seeing what others cannot see. This makes them capable of believing in big ideas, bold visions, and from this belief and vision grows courage that becomes in practice a spiritual, emotional, mental, and even physical fearlessness, the exact quality necessary to start and most importantly complete Moonshots.

One of the most important decisions of those building organizations capable of taking Moonshots is to be uncompromising about the necessity of selecting leaders who are fearless. *Find & Training leaders is Hard*

6) Understand without Moonshots Your Organization will Decline

It's fair to argue that NASA's Projects Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo were just a shiny distraction, that the taxpayers' revenue should've been spent fighting poverty and improving public education. But it's disingenuous to argue that Kennedy's moonshot was a waste of money. The technology that America reaped from the federal investment in space hardware (satellite reconnaissance, biomedical equipment, lightweight materials, water-purification systems, improved computing systems, and a global search-and-rescue system) has earned its worth multiple times over. Ever since, whenever we have worried about an America in decline, Kennedy's moonshot challenge has stood as the green light reminding us that together as a society we can accomplish virtually any feat.

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

A big part of why I am studying leadership in times of crisis is because like John F. Kennedy it is my belief that in every crisis there is danger but also opportunity. Right now, one of the greatest dangers I see is how the Coronavirus Pandemic is causing the closure and decline of organizations of every type. At the same time, there are other organizations who are not merely surviving but thriving.

The characteristic I have noticed in the thriving organizations like Amazon, Tesla, Zoom, Netflix, Shopify, Adobe, Home Depot, Salesforce, Moderna, Docusign, Wayfair is each one of

these companies made big bets or Moonshots based on their product category or the use of cloud technology years ago ([Prospering In The Pandemic: the top 100 companies](#)).

Understand this, disruptive moments are personally difficult and dangerous, but they also *Think forward - Hmm?!* test our capacity to think forward, to make life, work, and play investments which may look foolish in the moment, but allow us to thrive in the future. These are Moonshots and those organizations which fail to take them will either slowly decline or be quickly destroyed making Moonshots more necessity than choice.

7) Don't Let The Past Limit Your Future

Within months of winning the presidency in November 1960, Kennedy had decided that America's dillydallying space effort was symbolic of everything that had been wrong with the Eisenhower years. According to Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy's speechwriter and closest policy advisor, "the lack of effort, the lack of initiative, the lack of imagination, vitality, and vision" annoyed Kennedy to no end.

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

President Dwight D Eisenhower is one of the greatest leaders in American History. This did not stop President Kennedy from changing course when he followed Eisenhower in the Oval Office.

Kennedy recognized that the way Eisenhower and had led in the past would be ineffectual in the future, because the future was going to be different than the past. For many of us, the past and present represent the safety of familiarity. Unfortunately, this is often a false sense of safety, the same sense of safety bookstores felt when Amazon started selling books online or the movie industry felt when Netflix started mailing DVD's to homes (two things many readers surely don't remember because they are too young).

When these events occurred Borders Books along with Barnes and Nobles dominated book sales. Blockbuster dominated home movie sales. Today, few under 30 even know Borders or Blockbuster ever existed, and they question why anyone would drive any number of miles pick up a book from Barnes and Nobles when you can download an eBook from Amazon to your iPad in less time than it takes find the aforementioned bookstore on Google Maps.

The choice to become irrelevant like Borders and Barnes and Nobles or ubiquitous like Amazon is ours. We get to choose whether we will be obsolete like Blockbuster or transformative like Netflix.

These choices are not so much strategic as cultural, the willingness to loosen our grip on the past, remove the fading practices leading us toward obsolescence, and go to work creating an organizational culture willing to take the moonshots necessary to make us relevant and successful in the future.

8) Let The Next Generation Lead

Only forty-three when he entered the White House, Kennedy represented generational change. When he was born in 1917, West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer was already lord mayor of Cologne, French president Charles de Gaulle was a company commander in the French army, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev was chairman of a workers' council in Ukraine, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower was a newly married West Point graduate preparing to train soldiers for battle in World War I. At the dawn of the transformative 1960s, these leaders, all born in the nineteenth century, seemed part of the past, while Kennedy and his spacemen were the fresh-faced avatars of a future in which a moon-landing odyssey was a vivid possibility.

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

Generational change is necessary for the sustainability of any organization. This does not mean those of us who are aging are not essential to the organization, but that we must make

room for the next generation of leaders, especially those who think differently than we do, who see what we do not see, and are willing to take the bold risks to get there.

Everyone ages differently, but no matter how we age each one of us wants to be relevant, to have value in the eyes of our family, friends, and co-workers. The desire for relevance is what makes the embrace of generational changes in the leadership of an organization difficult.

Something I learned working with our New Media team is my experience was valued but the baggage of preconceived notions, presumptions, and assumptions which came with that experience made me afraid to take Moonshots.

Working together we established the fact that my fear was going to limit our capacity to move forward with boldness to seize obvious opportunities (even as I write this, I realize I have much work to do), which is why I made the decision to let the new generation of leaders around me lead.

At some point, those of us who age must make the organizations success and relevance more important than our own, which means choosing to become whatever the organization needs us to be, otherwise we will find ourselves the obstacle to the Moonshots necessary to grow our organizations into the future, to insure that we become the next Netflix instead of yesterday's Blockbuster.

9) Stop Settling and Start Exploring

Even without the manifest technological and societal benefits of Apollo, Kennedy would have set a course to the moon because he believed America had an obligation to lead the world in public discovery.

[American Moonshot: John F. Kennedy And The Great Space Race, Douglas G. Brinkley](#)

Something you will discover about John F. Kennedy if you decide to study his leadership is he was a thinker of great depth, a scholar really, which is revealed by the fact that his decisions were usually built on a foundation of intellectual conviction.

The idea that “he believed America had an obligation to lead the world in public discovery” is an intellectual conviction. He knew what America should be and was guided by this belief to lead accordingly.

As a result, Kennedy’s leadership was about exploration. He resisted the seductive call to play it safe and settle, and instead boldly moved America into the Space Age because he believed discovery was as much a part of America as freedom.

What intellectual conviction do you hold so deeply in your mind, heart, and soul you will pursue it regardless of how much support or criticism you receive? Moonshots are only possible if we have that depth of understanding and belief behind our decisions and actions.

10) Resist the Temptation for Easy and Embrace the Opportunity for Hard

“Why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? . . . We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.”

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Moonshots are hard. This is what I have learned studying the life and leadership of John F. Kennedy over the decades. He did not limit his Moonshots to Space Age, but he took them however fearfully in the areas of Civil Rights and Nuclear Conflict.

None of these Moonshot efforts were without error, but in each case, he sought to push past the status quo, to do hard things, and as a result despite a life unfinished we still remember him today as one of our greatest presidents.

This is what Moonshots do, despite our foibles, mistakes, character gaps, sins, and other less than appealing qualities, when we marshal our faith, vision, and courage to do things that will change the world people are inspired and helped, because they recognize the value of having leaders who resist the temptation to do the ordinary because it is easy and instead choose to embrace the extraordinary even though it is hard.

Conclusion

Leadership in times of crisis is the most difficult type of leadership. Based on my reading of history it is crisis which separates [real leaders] from those [posing as leaders.]

President John F. Kennedy gives aid to those who want to lead successfully in crisis by calling on us to develop and launch our own Moonshots as we recognize that in the midst of the danger is also opportunity, and once seized these opportunities are the very things that will help us conquer the crisis.

