

Scopelliti Line™ Definitions, Structure, Agreements & Leadership

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I. Introduction

This article requires a previous introduction to ***The Scopelliti Line™***, and assumes you've at least attempted to understand the points of that line, their purpose and why they merge together into a whole. As a second stage of study here, our hope is that you'll be ready to start executing by the line and its guidance immediately upon completion. A word should be said, also, about the practice of memorization. There are basically two forms, by rote and by reason. Rote memorization is often both misunderstood and suffers a poor reputation, undeservedly. It is far more powerful than most people realize. That stated, while rote memorization can't actually be skipped—it really does play an important role in learning—we can simply focus on the more popular and easier to defend method of memorization by reason. In a nutshell, if you remember the reason behind something, you become able, by association with that reason, to hold onto the information.

What you'll study next in section II to follow, are the definitions of the points of the line. You do want to memorize these points in order, and be able to speak about and explain them at need without reference to any supporting materials. That is, you must internalize the points of the line, on the path to mastering and internalizing the line itself as a whole, and from there, converting it into a living practice and discipline. Section III, then, will walk you through the structure of the points as they merge into the line, and will give you the best way to memorize the line by reason, not rote. In section IV we begin to build the policy-level culture and values of the line into the very structure of your leadership and selection of associates and followers. Finally, in section V we move into immediate and highly focused execution.

Although this article is written directly to working managers, there is no problem in sharing it with advanced followers, capable of deep study on their own. There should be no secrets here, and full comprehension is served by a multiplicity of sources of input and instruction. Still, the transformation to life on the line is the leader's work, alone, and no sharing of this article or any other instrument of instruction can take the place of the leader's hard decisions, hard work, and ever-growing mastery of execution. In the end, the line is the leader's job, alone. As others follow, that job will get easier, indeed. But, there can be no delegating the work of conversion. That understood, followers who are excellent students should benefit from this article greatly and become true aids to their leaders in this extraordinary transformation.

II. Definitions

- 1. Necessity:** Unarguable necessity is the relationship of oxygen to human life; no oxygen, you die. When you set your goals this way, with no wiggle room and no margin for fudging, you either hit your goals or not. Set this way, not hitting your goal is simply the definition of pure failure. When hitting them is as necessary as breathing, then there's no reason to argue anymore.
- 2. Deadline:** The ultimate deadline is death itself, but we need something not quite as final as that. Consider shopping at the grocery store. The deadline is when the clerk hits total on the cash register and your debit or credit card is either approved or rejected for payment. Your monthly mortgage payment, rent, utilities and other such bills are all deadlines. Your credit rating is driven by every payment deadline, and is the sum of your credibility in promising to pay, by deadline. One of the best examples, though, is a running race where the deadline is the first guy to break the tape; after that, everyone else loses. Or perhaps another good example is a world running record that you either break or don't break. Can you run a 4-minute mile? If you're trying, then four minutes is the deadline.
- 3. Rhythm:** Once you find your way to a single, absolute moment of success or failure in a single deadline, the reality that such deadlines happen all the time becomes obvious. Rhythm is the drum beat of your pattern of success and failure. One rhythm is the number of attempts and failures, analyses and new attempts all mounting up until you succeed. How many failures in a row can you weather and still keep coming back, always with new learning, until you win? The ultimate rhythm, though, is the rhythm of successes you can repeat with such perfection that they become a true floor beneath which, lower than which your performance never falls. This floor of minimum levels, now made solid, is called an unbreakable rhythm.
- 4. Accountability:** The three points so far can all be mastered by one person, internally within himself. Accountability is nothing more than the decision to share necessary goals and their rhythmic deadlines with someone else. Well, in addition to the decision, accountability is the relationship that results. The key for many is that internally they do not have the ability to master necessary goals and rhythmic deadlines by themselves. The help required to learn these arts is absolutely an accountability relationship. But, once the skills have been put in place, accountability survives, converting to the right way to live and work, and leading always to the next level of performance. Unless you're a solo practitioner, your work world requires powerful accountability relationships, rightly progressing.
- 5. Character:** Like a skyscraper or a redwood tree, an accountability relationship requires strong roots, a powerful and deep foundation. The first material required, like concrete or steel for a foundation for a building, is character. Character is the set of values that drive action. It is one's integrity of word, and the pain suffered when word or performance fails. It is the ability to see the other person's needs and

care as much if not more about those as one's own needs and desires. Character is the degree to which you'll suffer pain for integrity and by values, your ability to live beyond the moment's pleasures or the fear of pain. Without this, no accountability relationship has any meaning, at all.

- 6. Commitment:** Without character, commitment is meaningless. But, for all the character in the world, if that character cannot be targeted toward specific work, and if character cannot be converted into absolute commitment, then accountability is equally meaningless. In a word, commitment is what we're looking for. Commitment is what it means to have a word. If you give promises and then blithely break them, not caring, your word is false and the truth is you have no word. But, how can your word, your commitment be known to be meaningful? Well, you'd have to be able to think necessarily, and thus the words you give would not get argued against, by you, later. You'd have to know what a deadline was and be ready to live by it, absolutely. You'd have to be able to picture a sequence of necessary deadlines rising up into unbreakable rhythm. And, then, with those requirements in place, you'd have to be willing to work in the context of relationship, accountably, with no question that your character is on the line, every time you give your word. Thus, in a cumulative manner, commitment pulls on and requires all the elements above in order to be real. The reason for all the previous points is so that when one gives us a commitment, or we give one to them, we can know if it is real or not real.
- 7. Honor:** When commitments are real, and contain all the necessary elements to be so, then honor is the result. If you live by your word and your word is your law, then you're an honorable man. When a relationship has been built where honor flows in both directions, that relationship is an honorable one. Thus, while the ability to give and live by commitments is what we seek, the destination, the state of living that way is called honor. It is critical to understand that honor is not perfection based, at all. Rather, honor is the effort toward living by your word perfectly, but it is equally if not more so how you behave when you've failed. Honor untested by failure is not worth the name. Since honor is what you do with your commitments when you have failed, the elements of honor, listed as sub-points of the line, must all be present. When you have honor, you almost don't have to talk about any of the other elements. You just give your word honorably, and the rest is simply working in the real world, for performance.

III. Internal Structure

First, careful reading and re-reading will reveal that the first three concepts are fundamentally internal to a single performer. If you have the ability to perform all by yourself, and master the arts of necessity, deadline and rhythm, you'll perform well indeed. Put another way, this is the equivalent of stating that you're one of the rare few capable of self-accountability. Far more common is the need for help, in the context of relationship. Thus, concept four is no longer

an internal, but rather an external or relational concept. Then, for such a relationship to be founded properly, character, commitment and ultimately honor must be soundly in place as the underlying foundation (mentioned in concept #5 above). Here then is a simple layout of that structure:

Internal Concepts

Necessity, Deadline, Rhythm

External or Relational

Accountability

Foundational, for an Accountability Relationship

Character, Commitment, Honor

Second, it must be emphasized again that each point is incorporated into the following point. Conversely, each point is, therefore, inclusive all of points previous, cumulatively. We can also call this a chained structure of definitions.

That means that each definition relies upon and includes the previous definitions, which are therefore necessary as a part of each succeeding definition. Follow that out. You can easily understand necessity all by itself. It's a bit more challenging to add "unarguability" to necessity, but the benefits make the additional effort irresistible once you begin to get the point. Unlike the solitary concept of necessity then, the concept of deadline makes little sense if you've skipped or not understood the irrevocable nature of necessity first. Yes, you can have a deadline for an unnecessary thing, but by definition then, it will be an unimportant deadline, easily missed at little or no consequence. To be sure, deadline, as a concept must be understood for what it is in its own right, also. Thus, the task of comprehension is now two-fold where necessity was unitary.

Rhythm, then, requires that you can add an 's' to the word deadline, converting it into its multiple, "deadlines." Then, you must feel the time unit inside, setting up a meter or rhythm of one deadline following the next, marching through time to the beat of the drum of, yes, necessity. If you picture an awesome drummer for an orchestra or a rock band, never missing the beat under any circumstances, you start to get the musical picture of what true success must be. As we layered unarguability to necessity, we must add unbreakability to rhythm. Our drummer beats an unbreakable rhythm over necessary deadlines. In this image you have three concepts to merge. The process continues this way forward, for all seven concepts. Consequently, as you study this structure, remember to return to all previous points with each added definition. Not only must all seven points be memorized, in order, but also you must be able to define each point in its own terms as well as incorporate all previous points into your definition.

Last, you must be clear that for a goal to be set properly, each point and all in their cumulative power, must be fully present. When any single point is missing or is merely not sufficiently strong during the goal-setting practice, then performance is assured to suffer. Put another way, if you see any person

able to set goals that are consistently hit, most especially if hit in the face of opposition, then you can be certain that in one form or another, all seven of these points are present and sufficient.

IV. Seven Walls of Safety

Each one of the points is completely simple in concept. But, each point, simple as it may be to conceive, is the precise opposite of simple in reality. The reason for this is also simple. Human animals are not hard-wired to live this way. Human beings are the exact opposite of necessary in their basic, animal make up. The world is necessary, we are not. The world will be fine without us. We are, actually, quite unnecessary. We simply do not automatically behave by the laws of necessity. For us, life lived by the laws of necessity is like a life in prison; such life is the exact opposite of our basic nature. We blow off deadlines. We don't perform over and over again, rhythmically on time, dependably. We evade accountability. We are not born with strong character, and lie more like rugs than we stand as pillars. When one of us has strong character, he stands out, noticeably, since it is so rare. We run from commitment like a disease, and a man whose word is good is the best friend you have, to be treasured. Honor is far more often a trick than real, as a consequence of the fact that we humans simply do not perform by the rules of the line. We don't walk the line, we try to jump over it; that is, if we don't run away howling like wolves, yelling out the agony of it not being our fault.

Thus, if you wish to find safety in this world, you need the line. Each point of the line must function as the basis for a formal agreement. Taken in order, these agreements, all seven, become a series of tests, really a sequence of walls of safety. To create this safety, the question is always the same; simply ask, "Do you agree?" Those who don't agree, you don't let through. Those who do, you do let through, but only as long as both word and action demonstrate that agreement.

- 1. Do you agree that goals must be set as unarguably necessary?**
- 2. Do you agree that a deadline must be included, and it must be absolute, no wiggle room?**
- 3. Do you agree that once we can set a necessary goal and face a deadline, we must be ready to repeat this over and over again until it is an unbreakable rhythm?**
- 4. Do you agree that once we can do those things, we must build the accountability to share them with someone else, or even that for many, the three points above require outside help, accountability, in order to get right in the first place?**
- 5. Do you agree that sharing our necessary goals, and their rhythmic deadlines accountably can only occur on the foundation of character?**

6. **Do you agree that all the character in the world does no relational or performance good if it can't be converted into true commitment?**
7. **Do you agree that all the above can be summed up in the one word honor, and that honor is the real engine driving both performance and accountable relationships?**

V. Conclusion: The 8th Agreement and Leadership

8. **If you agree with all that, then how can you argue that a goal should ever, under any circumstances, be set in any other way; don't you then agree that all goals should be forged in this powerful iron, refined seven times as detailed above?**

The 8th agreement is a type of summation ritual. What we need is a new agreement, a new deal, a better contract, a better way of building and keeping safety in our world. The 8th Agreement sets that in stone for us, tying down the seven agreements that ensure true change. Moving now into execution, ask yourself the following questions. We'll conclude our explorations below, returning to question one as the one and only most important thing to focus on, in the end.

1. **How do I help my follower in his thinking about absolute necessity; cause and effect, and finding a goal so necessary that, once set, we'll suffer no further arguments? (As a leader, you must not forget the huge need to argue first, extensively and fiercely, BEFORE the goal is set, in order that there will be NO arguing or excuses AFTERWARDS!)**
2. **How do we tie down even a single deadline in all its force and necessary reality?**
3. **How do we convert one deadline into many, following each other in a continuous and one day unbreakable rhythm?**
4. **What does true accountability mean for this person, and do I have what it takes to cause him the productive pain he needs, when he fights me?**
5. **Does this person have the character to make the fight worthwhile, and if not, is there even the potential to build character—or not?**
6. **Can I picture a time when this person's commitment is as absolute as looming deadlines and necessary performance demands?**
7. **Do we, can we, will we ever live by the honor of pulling all the above elements into place?**

Truly, over time, as a leader you'll master all seven areas. But, to get started right now, the one thing to focus on alone is question 1. What kind of goal can be so important that hitting it rises to a value equaling oxygen? If one stops breathing, he dies. If your follower fails to hit a performance goal, will he die in

a business sense—is his goal that necessary? Or, is he able to argue that his goal does not have that much value? If he can argue against it, he must. If he doesn't argue in advance, he'll be making excuses later on. We can never know that something is necessary, absolutely necessary, until we've exhausted all arguments against it. Without arguing that something is unnecessary, or not as necessary as oxygen, we can never find what actually is necessary. Perhaps it is this failure to argue, when setting goals, that is the greatest sin of leadership, or at least one of the worst.

In conclusion, push your memory backward over countless goal-setting conversations from the past. If there is a single dynamic that rises to the top, it has to be the follower discovering precisely what the leader wants to hear and saying it with bold, persuasive strength and, if not zero commitment, then such low commitment that the goals demonstrate the greatest tendency to approach meaninglessness or at least insignificance in the face of inevitable obstacles unforeseen. The thing to grab hold is that, for most followers, goal setting is not about success, it is about successfully winning the leader's approval, in the moment. Thus, it is the art of arguing about goals until they attain a state of absolute necessity. If you master this one area alone, all the rest will follow, and you'll transform your world for the better, forever.