

Success Leaves Clues | Edition 1



Image Credit: Getty Images

- 1. Embrace your ability to be the change and make a change.*
- 2. Change is the answer. Human beings have survived due to their adaptability.*
- 3. Become relentlessly solution driven, turn default negative settings around. Build your 3Q Edge™, your greatest advantage in disruptive times.*

Success leaves clues, and so does great leadership. Enjoy this interview with James Strock, Trailblazer and Change-maker

James Strock is a trailblazer and change-maker who has made a profound difference in public organizations, government and companies through his work as an entrepreneur and reformer. He is also a prolific writer who is the author of one of my

FAVORITE leadership books, *Serve to Lead 2.0*, a book that should be the leadership manual for every 21st-century leadership curriculum.

1. ***What has been your greatest accomplishment as a trailblazer and change-maker serving a higher purpose?***

I've been blessed to be granted multiple opportunities to start up and/or bring change to institutions and enterprises. My service as environmental secretary for California and chief of law enforcement for USEPA each involved reform and renewal of agencies during turbulent times. My added value was largely from identifying and supporting talented teams. That kind of entrepreneurial approach is the thread runs through my work over the years.

2. ***At what age did you realize that you wanted to make a powerful difference in the world?***

Without according such generous characterizations to myself, I've always had an outsider's vantage point. This prompted me to challenge, without the reservations of insiders, what I perceived to be disappointing elements in the status quo. Looking back, I think a decisive time in my development occurred at age 16. I sought and was granted the opportunity to produce and moderate a weekly television program on the NBC affiliate in New Orleans, where I was in high school. At that time, there were only three major networks and PBS. Digital technology and cable were in the future. Through this experience, I was exposed to a number of remarkable people who generously consented to be guests. They ranged from politicians to entertainers to journalists to medical pioneers. What they all had in common was leadership in their realms. This was an extraordinary education that fueled my capacity to serve.

3. ***What has been the most important event in your life?***

This is an interesting question that one could take in any number of directions. Let me say that it's the fall

of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This was part of a historical earthquake, arguably the beginning of the end of the wars and associated totalitarian ideologies that wracked Europe and then the world beginning in 1914. I had the privilege of witnessing this remarkable moment first-hand in Berlin during New Year 1989-90. This is the greatest historical event of my lifetime to-date, without a doubt. It has had a great effect in my life and work, even though I'm an American, geographically distant. There was a transcendent flash, when the consciousness of people simultaneously altered, transforming apparently impregnable realities. When the spirit of the peoples of Central Europe came together as one, the ongoing demoralization of the Russian occupiers and their vicious apparatus gave way. The massed armaments and organized violence that ruled ruthlessly, in some cases non-stop for decades under various flags, could not withstand the simultaneous awakening of the people. Among my personal takeaways is the confidence—the faith—that transformational change can occur, no matter how unlikely it appears. In the words of Nelson Mandela, architect of another historic moment, "It always seems impossible until it's done."

4. ***What do you want to be remembered for?*** I would like to be a source of encouragement for others, helping them reach their potential. I strive to do that throughout my life and work. My work in leadership development is intended in large part to transmit and translate values and hard-earned wisdom from prior generations. Such history is very much a living thing and can provide actionable context for current challenges. Most importantly, it also links our efforts to rising generations, who should always be front and center in our minds and spirit. ***What is your favorite quote?*** As a voracious reader, I have many, many quotations that are favorites in various ways. If there is one setting where anyone must choose one sentiment over all others, it's

an epitaph. One of my favorites is from the English Labour Party leader, Tony Benn. To represent his ultimate service amid a wide-ranging, active life, Benn selected a concise message for his tombstone: "He encouraged us." That is an ideal that I also strive for.

5. ***What advice would you give your 20-year-old self?*** Strive to be the best listener not only that you know, but that you know of. Never miss an opportunity to be kind.



James Strock is an independent entrepreneur and reformer in business, government, and politics. A prolific writer, James Strock has authored His most recent book is the second edition of *Serve to Lead: 21st Century Leaders Manual*.

website: <https://servetolead.org> Wikipedia bio: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Strock



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