# CONTENTS

**Foreword** **xi**
*George E. Reed*

**Acknowledgments** **xiv**

**About the Authors** **xvi**

**SECTION I: Elements of Progress Making** **1**

**Chapter 1: Introduction 3**
Our Purpose 5
Our Approach 6
Notes 8

**Chapter 2: Exploring** **9**
Attributes of Explorers 11
*Embrace Uncertainty 11*
*Question the Conventional 13*
*Trust Their Intuitions 14*
*Delight in the Adventure 14*
Exploring and Progress Making 15
Concluding Thoughts 16
Notes 17

**Chapter 3: Refining** **19**
Attributes of Refiners 20
*Gravitate Toward Certainty 20*
*Strongly Value Order 20*
*Enamored With Precision and Clarity 21*
*Pursue Correctness 22*
Refining and Progress Making 23
Concluding Thoughts 24
Notes 25

**Chapter 4: Platforms** **26**
How Platforms Emerge 27
Features of Platforms 28
Concluding Thoughts 31
Notes 32

**Chapter 5: Progress** **33**
Defining Progress 34
Implications of the Progress Definition 37
*Assessing the Degree of Progress Requires a Complex Act of Judgment 37*
*Progress Always Creates New Challenges 38*
*Progress Is Not Inevitable 39*
*Progress Rarely Follows a Straight Line Leading From Point A to Point B 40*
*Progress in One Arena Can Influence Progress in Other, Seemingly Unrelated, Arenas 41*
Concluding Thoughts 42
Progress Maker Profile: Oscar Boldt and The Boldt Company 42
Lessons Learned 45
Notes 45

**Chapter 6: The Progress Model** **47**
How the Progress Model Works 49
So What? 51
*No Platform Is Perfect 51*
*Progress Occurs Under Conditions of "Dynamic Stability" 51*
*Perceptions of the Path Forward Vary Greatly Depending on Your Current and Projected Platform Position 52*
Concluding Thoughts 53
Notes 54

**Chapter 7: How Explorers and Refiners Make Progress** **55**
The Explorers' Mode of Making Progress 55
The Refiners' Mode of Making Progress 58
The Challenges Faced by Explorers and Refiners 59
*Fighting the Status Quo 59*
*Managing Fear 61*
*Battling Fatigue 62*
*Knowing When to Resist 63*
Concluding Thoughts 64
Notes 65

**Chapter 8: Progress Makers** **66**
The Central Conundrum 67
The Progress Maker's Response 68
Making the Right Choices 69
Progress Maker Profile: Ron Reed and The Discovery Channel 71
Notes 75

**SECTION II: Strategies for Progress Makers** **77**

**Chapter 9: Envision the Future With Calculated Boldness** **79**
Defining the Concept 80
*Shun Timidity 81*
*Shun Brashness 82*
What Inhibits Calculated Boldness? 82
*First, the Leader Overly Relies on Familiar Courses of Action 83*
*Second, the Leader Lacks Awareness of All the Potential Points of Intervention 84*
*Third, the Leader Fails to Engage in Thoughtful and Spirited Debate 85*
What to Do? 86
*Improve, Develop, or Acquire the Necessary Tools to Monitor Organizational Health and Direction 86*
*Ponder and Debate the Gateway Questions Before Proceeding 88*
*Identify System-Level Roadblocks to Progress 89*
*Calculate the Cost of Failing to Address Critical Issues 91*
*Use the Power of Self-Fulfilling Expectations 92*
*Learn to Tolerate Setbacks and Recover 93*
Concluding Thoughts 93
Progress Maker Profile: Brigadier General H. R. McMaster 94
Lessons Learned 98
Notes 99

**Chapter 10: Cultivate a Focused Flexibility Mind-Set** **101**
A Deeper Look at Focus and Flexibility 102
What Inhibits Focused Flexibility? 105
*Unexamined Success 106*
*Unmanaged Stress 107*
*Dysfunctional Sensory Mechanisms 108*

What to Do? 109
*Build Frequent Iterative Loops 109*
*Search for the Optimal Environments 110*
*Improve Peripheral Vision 111*
*Manage the Amount of Stress the Organization Places on Employees 112*
*Declare War on the Terrible Triad: Excessive Planning, Overconfidence, and Cognitive Bias 113*
*Legitimize Strategic Forgetfulness 118*
*Designate "Project Pruners" and Elevate Their Status 119*
Concluding Thoughts 120
Notes 121

**Chapter 11: Enlarge the Circle of Engagement 123**
The Concept 125
Why Don't We Enlarge the Circle? 127
*Expediency* 128
*Ego* 128
*Anxiety* 129
How Do You Enlarge the Circle of Engagement? 130
*Assemble a Diverse but Collaborative Team 130*
*Communicate in a Collaborative Manner 132*
*Seek and Discover the Unifying Point of Commitment 136*
*Moderate the Influence of Status and Roles 137*
*Sense and Seize Moments of Acceleration 139*
*Add Talent to the Team in a Thoughtful Sequence 140*
*Routinely Take Stock and Evaluate Progress 141*
Concluding Thoughts 143
Progress Maker Profile: Vicki Wilson and Door County Coffee & Tea 144
Lessons Learned 146
Notes 147

**Chapter 12: Foster the Growth of Investment-Worthy Employees 149**
Defining the Concept 150
*Growth-Fostering Environment* 150
*Investment-Worthy Employees* 152
Barriers 154
*Leaders Lack the Disposition to Invest in Others 154*
*Leaders Lack the Discernment to Properly Judge Talent 155*
*Leaders' Investments Are Small, Narrow, or Misguided 157*

What to Do? 158
*Craft a Talent Investment Approach 158*
*Diversify Your Investments in Employees 160*
*Make Routine Talent Investments 162*
*Regularly Measure, Analyze, and Discuss the Performance of Your Talent Investments 162*
*Routinely Rebalance the Talent Portfolio 163*
*Cut Your Losses 165*
Concluding Thoughts 166
Notes 167

**Chapter 13: Seek, Nurture, and Evaluate Actionable Ideas 169**
Defining the Concept 170
Phases to Generate Actionable Ideas 171
*Seek 172*
*Nurture 174*
*Evaluate 175*
Barriers 176
*"Sharpshooting" 176*
*Insular Mind-Set 177*
*Phase Imbalance 178*
What to Do? 179
*Build "Discovery Time" Into the Schedule, Surroundings, and Job Duties 179*
*Cultivate Employee Imagination 180*
*Pay Attention to "Lead Users" 181*
*Use the Right Skills at the Right Time 182*
*Articulate Criteria Used to Evaluate Ideas at Different Phases in the Process 183*
*Evaluate Ideas by Examining Attributes Rather Than Relying on Initial Impressions 185*
Concluding Thoughts 187
Progress Maker Profile: Laura Hollingsworth and the *Des Moines Register* and Gannett 188
Lessons Learned 192
Notes 192

**Chapter 14: Select, Detect, and Correct the Proper Errors 195**
Background 196
Error Management Framework 196
The Counterforces 199
What to Do? 202

*Conceptualize the Errors You Wish to Monitor 202*
*Systematically Document and Analyze Errors to Discern Underlying Error Patterns 206*
*Evaluate, Recalibrate, and Adjust the Radar Detectors 208*
*Adjust Error Detection and Correction Responsibilities of Stakeholders 210*
*Champion Productive—as Opposed to Defensive—Learning 212*
Concluding Thoughts 215
Notes 216

**Chapter 15: Practice Receiver-Centric, Strategy-Based, Feedback-Driven Communication 219**
Defining the Concept 220
*Receiver Centric 221*
*Strategy Based 221*
*Feedback Driven 224*
Barriers 224
*Spray-and-Pray Strategy 225*
*Technology-Driven Communications 225*
*Gap Between Desire and Resources 226*
What to Do? 227
*Select a Rich and Meaningful Signature Message 227*
*Use Multiple, Credible Channels for Important Messages 228*
*Translate Your Agenda for Different Audiences 229*
*Robustly Download Major Decisions 231*
*Identify, Listen to, and Use Opinion Leaders 232*
*Harvest Concerns and Convert Them Into Action Items 233*
*Encourage Upward Communication 234*
*Check the Effectiveness of Communication 235*
Concluding Thoughts 236
Notes 237

**Chapter 16: Conclusion 239**
Notes 243

**Appendix A: Progress Makers Discussed or Profiled 244**

**Appendix B: UMM and the Origins of Focused Flexibility 247**

**Index 255**