

Makers of Fire:

Leadership lessons for the next era of growth

Joseph Thompson

HCAF - IGNITE: Spark What's Next



The moment we lit up the night, the moment we discovered fire, was special.

Why?

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**Three things
must be
present for fire
to happen:**

- **Fuel**
- **Oxygen**
- **Heat**

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The Leadership Challenge

- **Organizations inherit foundations**
- **Growth depends on leadership mindset**
- **Leaders manage conditions, not just outcomes**

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Great leaders don't control the fire—they tend it

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The Fire Triangle:

- **Fuel** - Purpose, People, Principles
- **Oxygen** - Culture and Trust
- **Heat** - Vision and Action

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Fuel:

- **Clear Mission and Values**
- **Aligned People**
- **Stewardship of Legacy**

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Oxygen:

- **Healthy Culture**
- **Trust and Safety**
- **Empowerment**

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Heat:

- **Bold Vision**
- **Courage to Act**
- **Consistent Execution**

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Discussion:

- **Where is our organization strongest—
fuel, oxygen, or heat?**
- **Where are we weakest?**
- **What is one practical change we can
make this month?**

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The Leadership Mindset: Tending the Fire

- **Do we have the right fuel, or are we burning out our people or drifting from purpose?**
- **Is there enough oxygen, or is our culture restricting growth?**
- **Are we generating heat, or have we settled into complacency?**

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Igniting the Next Chapter:

- **They honor the past without being imprisoned by it.**
- **They cultivate people, not just performance.**
- **They act with courage when others hesitate.**

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Patagonia

- **Fuel (purpose and principles)**
- **Oxygen (Culture and empowerment)**
- **Heat (Courageous Action)**
- **Result:**



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Microsoft (under Satya Nadella)

- **Fuel (Re-centered Mission)**
- **Oxygen (Cultural Reset)**
- **Heat (Strategic Boldness)**
- **Result:**



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Netflix

- Fuel (Customer-first vision)
- Oxygen (Freedom and Responsibility)
- Heat (Reinvention)
- Result:



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Tesla (led by Elon Musk)

- Fuel (Mission-Driven Innovation)
- Oxygen (Talent Density and Intensity)
- Heat (Extreme Risk-Taking)
- Result:



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Starbucks (under Howard Schultz)

- **Fuel (Human-Centered Mission)**
- **Oxygen (Employee Investment)**
- **Heat (Turning Points)**
- **Result:**



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Toyota

- **Fuel (Long-Term Philosophy)**
- **Oxygen (Empowered Workforce)**
- **Heat (Disciplined Innovation)**
- **Result:**



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The Pattern Behind the Examples:

- They protect the fuel → clarity of mission and values
- They cultivate oxygen → trust, culture, and empowerment
- They apply heat wisely → decisive action and bold transformation

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Group Reflection:

- Which example resonates most with us?
- What can we adopt immediately?
- What must we change to grow?

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Balancing the Fire

Key Insight:

- Too much fuel → burnout
- Too much oxygen → inaction
- Too much heat → chaos

Balance creates momentum

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Final Thought:

- Honor the past (Fuel)
- Empower others (oxygen)
- Act with courage (Heat)

Build lasting impact by making fire!

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