

## The “Aeon Mini MBA” Course Description and Syllabus

The “Aeon Mini MBA course” is designed to help both new and experienced managers better understand their vital role in the health of the company through leadership and problem-solving skills. According to Cambridge University, **developing the next generation of leaders is the top challenge for 55% of CEO's worldwide. More than 77% of organizations report major leadership deficits at all levels of their industry; and, 83% of all companies believe that it is vital to “develop leaders at every level of the company”.** Yet only 5% of businesses have implemented leadership development programs.<sup>1</sup>

Study results show that **participants undergoing leadership training improved their learning capacity by 25% and increased their performance by an average of 20%.**<sup>2</sup>

Gallup's research has shown that **companies world-wide “fail to choose the candidates with the right talent for the job 82% of the time.”**<sup>3</sup> Among the many symptoms of poor leadership, “quiet quitting” is a major new phenomenon which costs the world's economy almost \$9 trillion per year. Building upon Gallup's breakthrough research, the “Aeon Mini MBA” program is centered upon developing these pivotal managerial talents according to the precepts of their seminal book, “**Human Sigma**”:

- They motivate every single employee to take action and engage employees with a compelling mission and vision.
- They have the assertiveness to drive outcomes and the ability to overcome adversity and resistance.
- They create a culture of clear accountability.
- They build relationships that create trust, open dialogue, and full transparency.
- They make decisions based on productivity, not politics.

The Aeon program does not stop there.

We recognize that the restaurant industry, perhaps more than any other, rarely hires trained managers, preferring instead to simply give management titles to technicians—a perfect recipe for disaster. That is why the first four weeks provides remedial education in the foundational principles of finance, business theory, critical thinking skills, and the fundamental subjects of the industry: nutrition, hospitality, and the neurological basis of organoleptics. We teach the skills that improve employee engagement, which improve customer engagement—thus increasing sales and profits—predict a high ROI for the program.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://online.em.jbs.cam.ac.uk/strategic-thinking>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318737359\\_Leadership\\_Training\\_Design\\_Delivery\\_and\\_Implementation\\_A\\_Meta-Analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318737359_Leadership_Training_Design_Delivery_and_Implementation_A_Meta-Analysis)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/231593/why-great-managers-rare.aspx>

While the Aeon Mini MBA course is centered upon a “success curriculum” of sixteen life-changing books, it goes way beyond a mere regurgitation of the texts. Chef Shelton demonstrates how he has been able to use his critical thinking skills combined with breakthrough scientific information to question the entire body of the industry’s conventional wisdom and deliver over 200 “Red Pill” paradigmatic brain shifts that offer revolutionary solutions to many of the greatest problems our industry faces.

One of Chef Shelton’s special skill sets is the distillation of data, information and knowledge into a language the audience can apprehend. Some of these books are highly advanced and require an interpreter who can “speak their language”. For over 40 years, he has taught advanced molecular biophysics and biochemistry principles to his professional cooks using a “*scientific metaphor*” language accessible to people without college backgrounds. So, whether the students read the books or not, they will come away from the course understanding the key principles contained within their pages.

## The “Aeon Mini MBA” Course Syllabus

### LEVEL I - FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE FOR MANAGERS

(4 weeks)

Reading List:

**The E-Myth Revisited**, by Michael Gerber (2009);

**Entrepreneurial Finance**, by Steven Rogers, 3rd Edition (2014);

**Setting the Table**, by Danny Meyer (2009);

**Unreasonable Hospitality**, by Will Guidara (2022);

**Food**, by Mark Hyman, MD (2018); and,

**The Science of Nutrition**, by Rhiannon Lambert (2022)

#### **Module 1 – Getting Ready to Think**

Purpose: Increasing policy options through critical thinking.

Validating the conventional wisdom as first order thinking—yet there are three higher levels that will yield much higher levels of truth.

“First Principles Thinking” and “Second order thinking” as the secret weapons of enlightened management.

\*Charlie Munger’s “Mental Models”

**RED PILL #1: “Managing to Prime Cost fallacy” – introducing the “Fixed Cost per Day per Chair” KPI.**

**RED PILL #2: The geographic fallacy – “That we can replicate an urban business model in a non-urban location without major modification of the business model.”**

\*Why the geographic distribution of Michelin-starred restaurants in America is so different than in Europe and elsewhere.

\*Hybrid business models for hospitality.

## Module 2 – The E-Myth

Purpose: Introduce and define the role and skill sets required of a technician, a manager, and an entrepreneur all differ from each other. We should develop these three parts in ourselves and have them work in harmony with each other.

*“Red Pill #3”: “A technician with a title does not a manager make.”*

*“Red Pill #4”: “A manager’s primary purpose depends upon the position they hold fallacy.”*

*“Red Pill # 5”: “The standard model General Manager-based organization structure fallacy.”*

Management Organization Structure according to business functional needs.

\*Why almost 99% of all start-ups in every industry fail.

*“Red Pill # 6”: “The technician’s rationale for creating a business is almost always a the primary cause of that business’ failure.”*

## Module 3 – Finance for Entrepreneurs - Basic Principles

Purpose: Improve financial acumen in management decisions.

The two key principles of finance:

1. The time value of Money; and,
2. The pricing of risk.

Valuation of companies. Multiple of EBITDA. Three-year trend line. External factors.

How management can double the value of a company in under three years.

*“Red Pill #7”: “The Restaurant Industry is mostly a capital destruction industry.” How to not be that!*

*“Red Pill #8”: “The Restaurant Industry is a single business fallacy—we are actually two different business, or more, that come from different industries under one roof.”*

*Thought Experiment: Loss of liquor license.*

*“Red Pill #9”: “The Restaurant Industry’s pricing formula is almost perfectly wrong.”*

How to take a restaurant from 1% EBITDA to 28% EBITDA by replacing the standard pricing model with the enlightened pricing model.

*“Red Pill #10”: “The Restaurant Industry’s perverse rewards programs.”*

## Module 4 – The Principles of Hospitality, Food Science, and Nutritional Science

Purpose: To bring the company back into alignments with the implicit promise of restaurants: “restoration”.

*“Red Pill #11”: “The USDA Food Pyramid is almost perfectly wrong.”*

Modern nutritional science.

Offering life-enhancing cuisines rather than life-shortening ones.

*“Red Pill #12”: “The Conventional Kitchen Management Theory Fallacy —*

THAT WE DO NOT REALIZE THAT OUR KITCHENS ARE MANUFACTURING PLANTS — AND NEED TO BE MANAGED AS SUCH. Therefore we do not practice the THEORY OF CONSTRAINTS management protocols but instead perpetuate the failed system of “COST BASIS ACCOUNTING MANAGEMENT” taught in business-schools the world over.

How we can take a suburban restaurant for 1% EBITDA to 30% EBITDA by increasing labor—instead of cutting labor—according to the precepts of the Theory of Constraints.

*“Red Pill #13”: “How the ‘Provide an Experience’ paradigm almost always turns the service team into the enemy of the patron.”*

\*The lineage of restaurants from Stately homes.

\*There is "a deal" going down on every table.

The primary function of restaurant service is to help get the deal done using any ethical means by putting both sides of the negotiating table into the correct psychological state to hear the other side in good faith.

\*How I grew corporate sales at my restaurant by 1,600% in a single year.

## LEVEL II - BEFORE WE CAN MANAGE OTHERS WE HAVE TO MANAGE OURSELVES

(2 weeks)

Reading List:

**Getting Things Done**, by David Allen (2015); and,

**Atomic Habits**, by James Clear 2018

### Module 5 – "Getting Things Done" and personal productivity

*"Red Pill #13": The "I don't have enough time to..." fallacy.*

Introducing David Allen's "Getting Things Done" system of personal organization and time management.

1. It IS possible to have a ton of things that need to get to done AND to have a clear head and a calm, centered, sense of control.

2. You already know how to do everything required to achieve this state, but you'll need to build some new habits to make it all a consistent reality.

#### The System:

**Objective #1.** Capture EVERYTHING that needs to get done into a trusted system.

**Objective #2.** We need to discipline ourselves to translate those "inputs" in "next actions."

The Apps:

1. **Calendar** app
2. **Todoist** app
3. **Evernote** app

How to organize work life AND personal life with this system.

Setting up your personal devices: iPhones, iPads, and other formats.

Learning Aids available.

### Module 6 - Using the GTD system to Manage Teams

Purpose: Explore the options available to manage conflict.

Complete an assessment to determine the primary style used to manage conflict.

Gain an understanding of the 5 approaches to managing conflict and the pros and cons of each.

Continue to flesh out the use of these apps in within the GTD system.

Explore the various features and benefits within each app.

Model how to manage a team or a department with GTD.

Accountability established with time stamps in **Todoist**.

## LEVEL III - BUILDING POWERFUL TEAMS

(2 weeks)

Reading List:

**Extreme Ownership**, by Jocko Willink & Lief Babin (2017)

**Setting the Table**, by Danny Meyer (2009);

**Unreasonable Hospitality**, by Will Guidara (2022);

### Module 7 - Extreme Ownership and Enlightened Hospitality

Purpose: Explain what makes the greatest leaders great.

*"Red Pill #14: There are no bad teams, only bad managers."*

1. They absolutely own everything in their world. Taking 100% responsibility for the success (and failure) of their missions—blaming no one and constantly seeking ways to improve.
2. There are no bad teams, only bad leaders.
3. Have a RESOLUTE BELIEF in the mission. Prioritize and Execute.
4. Discipline Equals Freedom.

Learn how to compose pointed agendas, facilitate meetings and stay on track.

Handle interruptions and other issues that arise.

Staying connected to Extreme Ownership like-minded people. The Podcast.

\*The Green Bicycle Story

\*The Mother's Day Story

### Module 8 - Atomic Habits and Enlightened Hospitality

Purpose: Understand how to become the best version of yourself in order to be worthy of leading others.

**The Four Laws of Behavior Change** are a simple set of rules we can use to build better habits. They are:

- (1) Make it obvious,
- (2) Make it attractive,
- (3) Make it easy, and
- (4) Make it satisfying.

#### The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

- (1) Be Proactive.
- (2) Begin with the end in mind.
- (3) Put first things first.
- (4) Think win/win.
- (5) Seek first to understand.
- (6) Synergy.
- (7) Sharpen the saw.

#### The Mind-Shift Challenge by Jay Abraham

*"Red Pill #15: The Institutional Marketing Fallacy — not emphasizing what makes you different from the competition in terms of how that benefits the customer."*

- "You are paid to think differently and more critically than your competitors think."

- The **Unique Selling Proposition (USP)** is the nucleus around which you build your success, fame, and wealth."
- Some people think of marketing as a technique for occasionally sneaking an inferior product or service into the public's consciousness...You know better. If you have committed yourself to fully improving other people's lives, marketing isn't about fooling people, its about educating them."

Marketing Rule #1: You can do anything great...

Marketing Rule #2: You can make any claim, but..

## LEVEL IV - HUMAN SIGMA AND COMPANY GROWTH

(2 weeks)

Reading List:

**First, Break All the Rules**, by Gallup Press (2016)

**Human Sigma**, by John Fleming & Jim Asplund (2007)

**The Goal**, by Eliyahu M. Goldrat, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition 2014

### Module 9 - Human Sigma Principles

Purpose: Human Sigma is generally recognized as the most important business book ever written, so it is of immense importance that we understand how managers directly impact employee engagement, how employee engagement directly drives company sales growth and profits.

Understanding the most expensive thinking error taught in most business schools: the "Cost Basis Theory of Labor Management".

*"Red Pill #16: Thinking of labor as a line item expense is almost always perfectly wrong—and is the most destructive thing taught be nearly all business schools."*

The Hierarchy of employee needs.

Reimagining the managers role.

Learn to motivate employees by inspiring and challenging them to grow, both professionally and personally, as they help the team exceed goals.

### Module 10 - Combining Human Sigma with the Theory of Constraints

Purpose: Demonstrating a system for kitchen management that combines Human Sigma with the Theory of Constraints.

*"Red Pill #17: The Conventional Job Description of a Chef turns him into the Company's biggest problem."*

The \$5.00 Digital Cookbook app that has rescued countless chaotic kitchens.

The "Chef Pack".

*"Red Pill #18: The manager's job is to 'catch them doing something wrong' fallacy."*

Engineering the workplace to give employees a true experience of personal high competency as quickly and as permanently as possible.

The "**Advanced Food Cost Control Module**" that aligns with the "Fixed Cost per Day per Chair" metric.

## LEVEL V - MACRO STRATEGY AND REVOLUTIONARY INSIGHTS

(2 weeks)

Reading List:

**The E-Myth Revisited**, by Michael Gerber (2009);

**Blue Ocean Strategy** by W. Chan Kim & Renée Mauborgne (2015);

**Neuroenology** by Gordon Sheperd (2

### **Module 11 - First Principles Thinking and Second Order Thinking**

Purpose: Understand when and how to use critical thinking skills. Charlie Munger's "mental models".

Gain knowledge of styles of managing teams including; coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting and coaching and when to

*"Red Pill #19": "The Always working IN the business instead of working ON the business fallacy."*

In the arc of career growth you should be spending a higher and higher percentage of your time working on your station, your department, your company and less and less time merely working in it.

Elaboration of Hybrid Business Models adapted to geographic circumstances.

The 'Shelton turnaround method for resorts'.

*"Red Pill #20": "The way to success is through competition fallacy."*

Great companies do not compete—they innovate.

*"Red Pill #21": "Recipes, and the 'season to taste' fallacy."*

Why most professional kitchens start to have a wave of dishes returned for seasoning issues at the same hour each service.

*Red Pill #22": "Classic wine and food pairing on an aromatic similarity basis fallacy."*

Why the classical basis is unsupported by science and poorly predicts pairings that work.

### **Craig Shelton's Neuroscientific Wine and Food Pairing Model**

## LEVEL VI- HOLISTIC KNOWLEDGE AND THE BIG PICTURE

(1 week)

Reading List:

**Fooled by Randomness**, by Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2001)

**The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions and the Unmaking of the World**,

by Iain McGilchrist, MD (2022)

### **Module 12 - The Limitations of pure logic and the need for intellectual humility.**

Purpose: Understand when and how to use managerial styles.

*"Red Pill #23": "The belief that only our own decisions cause the outcomes in our life fallacy."*

**Fooled By Randomness** explains how luck, uncertainty, probability, human error, risk, and decision-making work together to influence our actions, set against the backdrop of business and specifically, investing, to uncover how much bigger the role of chance in our lives is, than we usually make it out to be.

Here are 3 lessons from the book:

1. Life is non-linear, which makes the rewards of continued effort disproportionately big.
2. We need our irrational emotions to be able to decide.
3. Enjoy randomness when it's harmless and use stoicism to deflect it when it's harmful.

*RED PILL #24: "The 'We should trust conventional wisdom fallacy.'"*

THE NEUROSCIENCE OF THE DIVIDED BRAIN TEACHES THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO ENCOUNTER INTELLECTUAL FAILURE AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL – INSTEAD, WE SHOULD EXPECT IT!

*"Red Pill #25": "The 'How can this business be a negative investment if we are making money fallacy.'"*

The NOI vs. ROI paradox

*"Red Pill #26": "The 'Hours of Service' fallacy."*

*\*Non-Operating Revenue*

*"Red Pill #27": "The 'Productivity Hoax.'"*

*"Red Pill #28": "The 'Thinking Systems hidden weakness.'"*

*Closing remarks.*