

Still Serving: A Decade Later—How Alan Mulally's Leadership Still Shapes Our Future

By Dave Wilson – June 27, 2025

Intro

In 2006, when Alan Mulally stepped into Ford during its darkest hour, he didn't just turn a company around—he transformed how I would lead for the next decade and beyond.

Back then, I wrote about how Alan taught me to S.E.R.V.E. Today, nearly ten years later, those lessons are more than memories—they're daily practice. They've become the backbone of our family of companies, the way we build culture, the way we grow people, and the way we weather adversity.

This isn't a retrospective. It's a celebration of how timeless leadership, rooted in service, can endure, evolve, and keep driving us forward.

No Tie, No Teleprompter, No Problem (Still True Today)

I still remember that first time Alan addressed us at Ford Field. No tie. No teleprompter. Just a sport coat, a smile, and a vision. It wasn't just what he said—it was how he said it. Calm. Direct. Personal. He brought an energy that replaced fear with belief.

That moment taught me that authenticity wins. Today, I've carried that same lesson into how I address our teams. Whether it's at an all-hands meeting or a quiet 1:1, people respond to leaders who speak from the heart—not from a script.

Alan's example gave me permission to lead as myself, and in doing so, gave others the confidence to show up as their best selves too.

S.E.R.V.E. Revisited

Alan Mulally's leadership philosophy impacted me so deeply that it reshaped our business. His commitment to service, his humility, and his ability to unite people inspired us to transform how we lead.

To this day, we still run our weekly Business Plan Review (BPR) meetings at Preston Automotive Group—and now across our full portfolio: iFrog Marketing, SafeHouse Security, and DHW Holdings. These meetings instill accountability, collaboration, and clarity. They help ensure we're leading with purpose and intention.

What began as inspiration has become infrastructure.

Elevate the Team, Elevate the Mission

Alan believed deeply in elevating people—emotionally, professionally, personally. He didn't see employees as job titles. He saw them as teammates with untapped potential.

At DHW Holdings, we've embraced that mindset by intentionally developing leaders from within. From mentoring my children who now lead key divisions, to giving future stars room to grow—we're elevating our mission by investing in our people.

We celebrate wins, share credit, and shine the spotlight across the org chart. That started with Alan, and it continues with us.

Resolve & Resiliency (Modern-Day Application)

I watched Alan stand tall during the financial crisis—calm in the storm, unwavering in purpose. He taught me that toughness doesn't have to be loud—it has to be consistent.

That lesson came back hard during recent years. Between economic pressures and personal trials, including my grandson Carson's complex medical journey, I had to lean deeper into resolve and resiliency. I had to lead not just with plans, but with peace.

Alan's blueprint reminded me: lead forward. Lead together. Stay the course.

OnePAG to OneDHW (Value-Based Leadership)

In the spirit of Alan's ONEFORD plan, we created our own: ONEPAG. One Team. One Plan. One Goal. What started in our dealerships has now become a cultural cornerstone across all of DHW Holdings.

From Preston Automotive Group, where our journey began, to SafeHouse Security, our residential and commercial security company, to iFrog Marketing Solutions, our digital growth agency, and DHW Holdings, our commercial real estate firm—these principles guide everything we do. Whether we're delivering award-winning automotive experiences, safeguarding homes and businesses, driving digital strategy, or managing real estate investments, the ripple effect of Alan's model continues to shape how we operate and how we lead.

Every associate knows our values and our mission. They live it daily—and our customers feel it too.

“Show the Love” Still Lives

We still wear the red wristbands that say “Show the Love Daily”. But over the years, it has come to mean even more.

My mother, Pansy Wilson, became the heart behind that phrase. She was the true ambassador of “Show the Love Daily” in our family, our businesses, and the community. With her background as a public health nurse, she embodied service and compassion in everything she did. She didn’t need recognition—she just showed up with a helping hand, a kind word, and a servant’s heart.

When Mom met Alan, they connected instantly. They shared that same belief: that love and leadership belong together. Today, the bracelet we wear reminds us of her legacy—and the kind of leader she taught us all to be.

The Mulally Room & The Legacy That Continues

Alan and I stayed connected over the years, trading notes, leadership articles, and encouragement. The Alan Mulally Room was originally a wing off our garage that also housed our car collection. When we moved the cars to our new Car Barn, we didn’t just leave the Mulally Room behind—we recreated it there, giving it even more presence and purpose.

Today, the expanded room continues to serve as a tribute to the values Alan inspired in us—filled with memorabilia, stories, and leadership reminders that shape our culture. He signed hoods. He shared wisdom. And he inspired not just me, but my entire family.

We now share those same lessons with the next generation—from my son and daughters stepping into leadership roles, to our extended team of emerging leaders.

Engage Everyone—Still Sending Quotes

Years ago, I started sending daily motivational quotes to our team. It was a simple act, but it grew into something bigger. Alan even became part of that journey—he’d respond when certain words hit home.

Today, we still send those quotes. But we’ve expanded how we engage our teams—with leadership lunches, team text threads, celebrations, and story-driven culture building. Engagement isn’t a tactic. It’s a heartbeat.

Legacy Leadership: Why It Still Matters

Alan didn't just lead Ford. He led a movement. And that movement lives on.

It lives in our businesses, in our family, in our foundation. It lives in how we treat our people, how we respond to adversity, and how we show up for our customers and our community.

Because when you SERVE, you don't just get results.

You build a legacy.

And that legacy still drives us—every day.

We're still learning from Alan today. The book *Relentless Implementation* by Alan Mulally and Adam Witty has become our handbook for Alan's leadership model. We're leaning even more into the structure and discipline of the BPR and SAR practices he made famous.

As Alan keeps teaching others, we continue to follow—and add to our arsenal of lessons learned from one of the greatest leaders of our time.

For me personally, I'm working every day at getting better at simply being there. When you engage with Alan, he has this incredible way of making you feel like you're the center of his attention—fully present, fully focused. That's an attribute that's hard to mimic, but it's one I'm trying to master. If I can be even half as good as Alan at that, it will be a win.

As you can see, our lessons learned from Alan aren't a one-and-done story. They're not locked in the past—they're living, breathing, and evolving with us. His leadership philosophy continues to challenge us, shape us, and inspire us. And while we're enjoying the journey, we refuse to let complacency creep in. We're still holding ourselves—and our teams—accountable to keep fine-tuning what we've learned. Because great leadership isn't a destination. It's a daily discipline. And thanks to Alan, we're committed to living it out every single day.