Leadership Part 1

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Good leaders inspire their followers to have confidence in them. But great leaders inspire their followers to have confidence in themselves.

As a leader, you will never get ahead until your people are behind you.

–John C. Maxwell

Television plays an important role in the American culture. Studies indicate the average viewing time per month is about 142 hours.[1] This equals about 4.7 hours per day! A number of studies have been done on the impact of television viewing. One thing that is commonly known is the next-day discussion of characters on shows and the large number of references to these television shows. The fade-out in the last episode of the *Sopranos*, the fade-forward on *Lost*, the antics of *The Office*–all of these are discussed, dissected, and criticized. Do they also influence the way we see aspects of our lives? Do the "leaders" in these shows help determine the way we evaluate leaders?

One of the more popular shows is the medical drama *House*. There are several leaders in this show and none of them are textbook examples of excellent leaders. The hospital is headed by the overly sensitive Dr. Lisa Cuddy. She must be an excellent doctor and administrator to be dean of medicine at a leading teaching hospital. However, she is incapable of effective leadership when dealing with Dr. Gregory House who runs roughshod over hospital policies, procedures, and her direct orders. Oncologist Dr. James Wilson holds very little sway over his colleague and friend, acting almost as an enabler and constantly looking befuddled as House runs amok in both professional and personal arenas. And, last, House himself is leader of a team of gifted doctors called in to diagnose and treat the difficult cases. The fact that the patients are successfully treated by the end of the hour show does not obscure the fact that if there was calm,

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rational leadership the patient might have been cured faster and with a great deal less trauma for all involved. Of course, if that were the situation then the show would be short, boring, and canceled. But as a lesson in leadership styles, this show is the height of dysfunction.

Leadership cannot be befuddled, ineffective, or constantly bypassed. And it shouldn't be rude, thoughtless, untrustworthy, or sarcastic. On television it might be entertaining but in real life it can be devastating to individuals and to the organization. Rather than dwell on the leadership characteristics in *House* that may influence some viewers, a review of the literature can present a positive view of the different leadership styles and skills that can help all become better leaders.

All leaders have two common characteristics: first, they are going somewhere; second, they are able to persuade other people to go with them.

Kouzes and Posner's preface clearly states the purpose of their book:

> *The Leadership Challenge* is about how leaders mobilize others to want to get extraordinary things done in organizations. It's about the practices leaders use to transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards. It's about leadership that creates the climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into remarkable successes.[2]

This long book (almost four hundred pages) reads much faster than expected with practical information, bulleted lists of important points, and interesting examples. The authors discuss the five practices of exemplary practice (model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, encourage the heart) and the ten commitment behaviors that advance these practices.[3] The last chapter, "Leadership is Everyone's Business," should be read for the no-nonsense approach to the leader in everyone, everywhere.

The truth is that leadership is an *observable set of skills and abilities* that are useful whether one is in the executive suite or on the front line, on Wall Street or Main Street, in any campus, community, or corporation. And any skill can be strengthened, honed, and enhanced, given the motivation and desire, along with practice and feedback, role models, and coaching.[4]

There is an inclination to quote this entire chapter as it provides a wonderful summary of the importance and centrality of leadership for individuals and organizations. Inspiring and practical–a must read.

Launching a Leadership Revolution[5] provides one of the best reasons for studying leadership:

Everyone is called upon to lead in some capacity sooner or later in life. Some of the issues involved are big, some are small. Sometimes the responsibilities requiring leadership last a lifetime, and sometimes they are needed only for a moment. Leadership, then, is something each of us should strive to understand better and utilize more fully.[6]

Leadership can revitalize and remove complacency. The first chapter is an excellent introduction to leadership; it involves empowering not power, helping fix and moving forward not controling, and serving others not being served. As in many leadership books, there are examples of famous people and historical moments to illustrate the points of the book. The book progresses through basic leadership skills to the five levels of influence as described by John C. Maxwell (position, permission, production, people development, and personhood) and Jim Collins (capable individual, contributing team member, competent orchestrator, effective leader, and executive).[7] Brady and Woodward explore these with concepts of learning, performing, leading, developing leaders, and developing developers of leaders. These are explained clearly in individual chapters. They conclude that leadership is a process that takes work, preparation, learning from failure, and growth. They recommend finding what makes you come alive, what inspires you, and acting on that. "Ultimately, leadership is a personal responsibility. You have to figure it out as you go."[8] Excellent, inspiring book that almost reads like a novel.

Middleton clearly tells us what her book, *Beyond Authority: Leadership in a Changing World*, is about–changes in leadership.[9] Change is needed, but often when leaders don't have the control, when boundaries are blurring, authority is not clear cut, and partnerships are increasing, so traditional leadership tools need to be supplemented. The workplace and society itself are interconnected spheres, not well-defined silos. Leaders need to understand that and be flexible enough to excel in this environment. Covering the why as well as the how,

Middleton uses specific examples, diagrams, lists, and a writing style that almost seems as if she is speaking to the reader. Very interesting and worthwhile.

As a leader, you should always challenge people to move out of their comfort zone, but never out of their strength zone.

On Leadership: Essential Principles for Success uses the events around Hurricane Katrina as the basis for much of the discussion and framework of the book.[10] After defining leadership, subsequent chapters discuss some of these characteristics using personal stories, examples of various people, discussion, and the call for self-analysis. The book concludes with a chapter on some leaders the author wants to honor. The author notes that a true leader does the necessary homework, demonstrates courage and persistence, doesn't give up when faced with challenges, is relentless in pursuit of goals, fully understands the mission and the goal, has integrity, is ethical and decisive, is a good listener, understands that unity leads to success, inspires others, never asks others to take risks that he or she would not take, is trustworthy, learns quickly whom to trust, and recognizes that leadership is not an ego trip.[11] He notes that "success alone does not equal leadership,"[12] and "Anyone can pass for a leader in a problem-free world."[13] How true. Interesting, inspirational, fast reading.

Leadership: Understanding the Dynamics of Power and Influence in Organizations is a textbook for upper-evel undergraduates and for graduate students.[14] Sections review what leaders do; fundamentals of leadership; leadership abuses; models; contemporary views; and societal, organizational, and gender issues. Numerous reprinted writings from many of the leaders in the field are included. Good text for understanding the subject, especially useful may be the sections on the "dark" side or abuses of leadership.

In *Sustaining Change: Leadership that Works*, Rowland and Higgs write a good introduction on the role of change in leadership.[15] The book has three parts. The first is a researched look at change and how leadership affects it. They list four practices that are needed to play as a change leader (insight and comprehension; building the organization's governance, networks and skills; building capability; maximizing performance by growing talent and building knowledge),[16] and they list four distinguishing practices that are needed to win (an attractor who creates and embodies vision, edge and tension, the type who tests and challenges, the container who manages the anxiety and turbulence for positive operation, and the transformer who "can slow down the busy-ness of an organization" and promote learning and inquiry).[17] Part 2 develops these with an emphasis on personal analysis and putting the practices into action. Part 3 pulls all of the information together for both the individual reader and for teams. Very readable, well worth the time to investigate their perspective on leadership.

Developing Leadership Talent has an abundance of charts, tables, and checklists.[18] The book provides a clear,

step-by-step guide with an emphasis on assessment and a challenge to stretch beyond one's comfort zone to become a better leader. Especially useful is the chapter "Leadership Competencies" with its competency wheel, which lists a number of behaviors (demonstrates a willingness to hear others, is able to bring out the best in people, knows when and with whom to build alliances, and so on) that will help determine what competencies need to be developed. Another tool is the gap analysis between the way skills are now and how they should be. After this assessment is done using the tools described in the book, action is planned. A number of worksheets, bulleted lists, suggested strategies, and evaluation tools provide guidance for a successful leadership development program. Well worth the time to review this short, easy-to-read book.

Without a lot of people working together, there would be no successful leaders.

Meant as a textbook, Van Wart's *Leadership in Public Organizations*[19] is in some ways an abridgement of the author's classic work *The Dynamics of Leadership in Public Service, Theory and Practice*. The textbook provides a very good overview of a number of theories, including charismatic, integrative, transactional, transformational, and distributed theories of leadership. It also provides a succinct description of leadership traits (flexibility, integrity, decisiveness, resilience, and so on), skills (social, communication, analysis), and behaviors (problem solving, delegating, assessing, planning, consulting and so on). As is typical with textbooks, there are explanatory charts and diagrams called exhibits that enhance the text and clarify the points. Case studies and discussion questions are also included. The book is highly recommended for its clarity and its vast amount of information covered in a very well written manner.

John Maxwell, author of many books on leadership, writes "this book is the result of years of living in a leadership environment and learning through trial and error what it means to be a leader."[20] He describes leadership as having some of the following characteristics: leadership is the willingness to put self at risk, make a difference, take responsibility, stand out in a crowd, submerge ego for what is best, speak to the hearts of others, inspire others, and be courageous.[21]

The first chapter, "If It's Lonely at the Top, You're Not Doing Something Right," sets the tone for this practical book. Chapters end with both application exercises that encourage readers to consider what they've learned and do some self-analysis, and with a mentoring moment, a short note of advice for those mentoring future leaders. Short, pointed chapters with main points bolded and short explanations. Good use of bulleted lists. Especially useful are the last three chapters: "Few Leaders are Successful Unless a Lot of People Want Them to Be" and its list of the types of supporting people; the essential "You Only Get Answers to the Questions You Ask," and "People Will Summarize Your Life in One Sentence–Pick It Now." Take time to consider your sentence! This book might inspire you to become the type of leader who will inspire a wonderful sentence. Really useful and enjoyable reading.

Mention must be made of the article by Kort that looks at the term leadership and discusses the definitions of the term and concludes, "it seems that a re-orientation from relations to actions provides the basis for a more accurate account of leadership."[22] Instead of focusing on the relationship aspect, actions are the relevant aspect. Interesting from a philosophical point of view.

For another philosophical overview of leadership, take a look at the article "Leading by Example" by Walji.[23] A great deal of information is reviewed in under twenty pages. A volume in the Harvard Business School Press' Lessons Learned series, *Leading by Example* includes the thoughts of fourteen leaders in business and academia on their successes and failures.[24] Check the list of authors and their titles for those that might interest you on a particular topic. Interesting and fast reading.

Total Leadership encourages reader interaction with exercises requiring critical consideration of their own goals, thoughts, and situations.[25] It encourages readers to articulate where they are, where they want to go, and why. One of the interesting exercises is the four-way attention chart in which the reader can determine the focus and importance of work, home, community, and self in their lives. There are examples, appendixes, references, and a website (www.totalleadership.org). Very worthwhile reading and careful study.

If you are looking for a breezy, uplifting account of how people can develop as leaders and as people, take a look at *Trade Up!* Sharpnack uses some interesting definitions for terms: "context is the often *unexamined mindset or frame of reference we operate from that informs our behavior and evokes behavior from others*. In other words, context is the belief system you carry inside"[26] and "conclusion: Any human interpretation, perception, opinion, or explanation."[27] You have developed conclusions on your futures, how you work with people, your skills, and more. All of these influence who you are. The book has five chapters corresponding to the five skills: revealing your prevailing context, owning your context, designing a new context, sustaining your new context, and engaging that context. The goal is to let the reader redesign their life and their leadership. Very interesting perspective.

Reflections on Leadership begins with a foreword by James MacGregor Burns who has been referenced in earlier columns and has many important works on leadership.[28] He sets the stage for this important book that provides a serious, scholarly look at both the wide range of Burns' writing and those who academically agree and disagree with his thoughts. This is not a book to put into immediate practical use in your library, but it is highly recommended for those with an interest in Burns and leadership theory.

The choices we make in critical moments help to form us and to inform others about who we are.

In *It's Not About the Coffee: Leadership Principles from a Life at Starbucks*, Howard Behar shares his experiences as an executive at Starbucks. The foreword states the book is for those who want "to understand what it means to dream big dreams . . . identify and develop your own values skills, and goals and make sure they guide your life and career . . . understand the value of human behavior and who wants to elevate the morale and results inside their own group or organizations . . . looking for good resources on how to manage people and how to build things that endure."[29] The book can probably be summed up from a paragraph in the introduction:

> If you grow people, the people grow the business. That's it. The number-one priority. If your people are better human beings, they'll be better partners of the company. If you think of your customers as people, you'll make a connection with them, and they'll come back over and over again to enjoy the coffee and the experience. If you contribute meaningfully to the world around you, that caring comes back to you in kind.[30]

Substitute library for company and books for coffee and it is the library philosophy in a nutshell. He states that there are ten principles of personal leadership. They are: know who you are, know why you're here, think independently, build trust, listen for the truth, be accountable, take action, face challenges, practice leadership, and dare to dream.[31] He develops each of these in a chapter. Unbelievably practical, fast reading, and enjoyable. Each chapter ends with questions to ask yourself. While not academic or library focused, this is an encouraging, inspiring read for all.

Robin Ryde notes in the introduction that, "This book provides a blueprint of how we can move hearts and minds and create incredible things along the way," and then she provides a guide for the reader.[32] At only 110 pages, this is definitely worth reading from start to finish. The first chapter, "Thinking on Autopilot," talks about the tendency of people to look for deficiencies rather than to look for what can be learned. There is a table about and discussion of standard thinking repertoire that is very interesting. These thought types are described as deficient, rational, sticky, common sense, binary, and equity thinking. How we are ingrained to think has real impact on our actions and our results. Chapter 2 is "Switching Control to Manual," which concludes "we need to permit people to make 'mistakes' in the name of better problem solving."[33] The final chapter contrasts the thinking described in chapter 1 with positive alternatives. The gist of the book is that there are skills that can be developed for deeper thinking, discussion, and action. Using these holds "the key to more effective buy-in, to raising the commitment and energy, to generating breakthrough ideas, and to delivering higher organizational performance."[34] Very interesting book that introduces some important ideas.

It Starts with One: Change Individuals, Change the Organization gives advice that is the opposite of much other advice you might read.[35] In economic terms it might be called a trickle up theory rather than trickle down. The authors identify three barriers to change: failure to change even when people see opportunities or threats; failure to move even when people see the need; failure to finish even when they see the need and start to change.[36] The book provides an interesting graphic that illustrates the text of what the authors take to be fundamental process or cycle of change. This cycle is do the right thing and do it well, know when the right thing is no longer the right thing, do the new right thing poorly at first but better eventually.[37] The next six chapters develop this process continuing with another chapter, "Putting It All Together." The final chapter, "Getting Ahead of the Change Curse" reviews different kinds of change, costs, and difficulties. The types of change are anticipation (least costs, most difficult to start), reactive (moderate costs, difficult to start), and crisis (most costly, easiest to start). While noting the principles of the book work with all three of the types of change, the authors' experience indicates that anticipatory change has the greatest potential payoffs and anticipatory change leaders are in demand. They conclude, "Lasting change starts from the inside out-by first changing individuals. In many cases, the first person to change is us. We change individuals, ourselves and others, by remapping minds to see, move and finish. By changing individuals, we really can change organizations."[38] That is a worthwhile goal. Wonderful explanations are clear and inspiring. A must read.

Much has been said about the role of the Internet in our lives. One more is "the Internet age is now setting the stage for a seismic shift in leadership."[39] Along with the role of teams and project-based work, in *Facilitating to Lead! Leadership Strategies for a Networked World*, author Ingrid Bens notes the role of the leader has changed from overseer and controller to empowerer, collaborator, encourager, and facilitator. "The leader who will be most effective in the networked world is one who can connect with people and spark collective action."[40] The book is very fast reading with diagrams, tables, and bulleted lists. After a clear discussion of facilitative leadership (fl), strategies and the process of fl are reviewed with clear, step-by-step text, and lists. Especially useful is the section on evaluation. She concludes with, "When organizations create the right supporting conditions and when masterful facilitative leaders are deployed in the right settings, member will experience a workplace that is organized, efficient, responsive, cooperative and creative."[41] Positive outcomes include efficient meetings, learning is improved and expanded, better working relationships, and an energized staff who are leaders themselves. This is a positive

outcome that any library would want. A bibliography and two self-assessments close the book. A must read.

It's wonderful when the people believe in their leader. It's more wonderful when the leader believes in the people.

While addressing leadership from a school perspective there are enough parallels with libraries to make Thomas Sergiovanni's collection of articles useful reading.[42] He points out in the first section that effective leadership is different based on location. It should be noted that many of the articles make a great deal of sense for professions other than schools. So, while keeping in mind that the two endeavors are not exactly the same, a careful reading of this book is beneficial. Articles in the first section develop the idea of the pillars of leadership (technical, educational, symbolic, and cultural) and the heart, hand, and head of leadership. Section 2 discusses developmental stages and the importance of addressing the appropriate level and encouraging growth. Leadership needs to be a growth endeavor, one of continual progress. The third section looks at the connections among the participants, and the fourth is on value-added leadership.

> In an organizationally competent school, everyone has a role that defines his or her obligations and everyone is part of a reciprocal relationship that spells out mutual obligations. Reciprocal role relationships enable informal communities of practice to bubble up and institutionalized collaborative cultures to trick down. When such informal communities of practice and institutionalized collaborative cultures are joined, schools achieve the desired balance between individual autonomy and collaborative work. They become smarter. Together, smart teachers become smart schools, compounding what they know.[43]

This is also applicable to libraries. Not necessary reading, but very interesting.

Because this column started with a look at the contrarian Dr. Gregory House, it is fitting that our last resource reviewed is Sample's *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership*. In the foreword, Warren Bennis writes, "This is among the rarest of contemporary leadership books: a rigorously honest one that is both brutally unsentimental and firmly grounded morally."[44] Dr. Sample is president of the University of Southern California (USC) and notes that, "leadership is highly situational and contingent; the leader who succeeds in one context at one point in time won't necessarily succeed in a different context at the same time, or in the same context at a different time."[45] So, leadership is situational and it is hard to define—it is one of those things that you might not be able to define it but you "know it when you see it."[46] Sample describes the purpose of his book as getting the reader

to think about leaders and leadership from a fresh and original point of view—from what I like to call a contrarian perspective. By contrarian I don't mean counter to all conventional wisdom—indeed, much of the conventional wisdom about leadership (and about most other things for that matter) is absolutely true. But just as you can't become an effective leader by trying to mimic a famous leader from the past, so you can't develop your full leadership potential, or even fully appreciate the art of leadership, by slavishly adhering to conventional wisdom. The key is to break free, if only fleetingly, from the bonds of conventional thinking so as to bring your natural creativity and intellectual independence to the fore.[47]

There is no way to summarize the ideas he covers in the book better than his own words: "think gray, see double, never completely trust an expert, read what your competition doesn't read, never make a decision yourself that can reasonably be delegated to a subordinate, ignore sunk costs, work for those who work for you, know which hill you're willing to die on, shoot your own horse, sometimes allow the led to lead the leader, and know the difference between being leader and doing leader."[48] Chapters develop these ideas, including a case study based on his experiences at USC. The conclusion has fifteen contrarian principles that are well worth very close consideration. The book is a gem and should be read by all.

Leadership is a complex topic, and a second column will look at additional resources. When we consider leaders we know or have observed, it might be interesting to keep in mind a comment made by Dr. Sample: "A leader should always act as though he himself, not history or fate, is responsible for his actions."[49] On second thought, maybe Dr. House isn't such a bad leader after all!

Author's note: Bold headings are taken from Leadership Gold *by John C. Maxwell (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008).*

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