

Book Notes for

A Leader's Legacy Kouzes & Posner, 2006

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The purpose of these notes is to provide an overview of the contents of this important book.

"What kind of difference do I want to make?" (p. 4)

"journey from success to significance" (p. 5).

Part 1: Significance

Most important leader is the one we turn to (p. 11).

What difference do you want to make? (p. 12)

"Being a leader brings with it a responsibility to do something of significance that makes families, communities, work organizations, nations, the environment, and the world better places than they are today" (p. 13).

"Everything leaders do is about providing service" (p. 14).

People follow leaders who solve problems and meet their needs (p. 14).

Compassion: suffering with and sharing the suffering of others (pp. 17-18).

Leaders "see beyond their own needs" (p. 18).

"What will others say about you when you're no longer around?" (pp. 18-19)

Leaders teach and mentor (p. 22).

Performance appraisals are "mutual learning opportunities" (p. 23)

"teachers continue to teach as we go on to tell their stories" (p. 24).

"Each of us, whether we intend to or not, will become at some point a character in someone's story" (p. 25).

What stories do others tell about me? What do they learn from the stories they tell? (p. 25).

"Pity the leader caught between unloving critics and uncritical lovers" John Gardner (p. 27).

Want feedback, ask, "How am I doing?" (p. 32).

"to your direct reports *you* are the most important leader in your organization" (p. 33).
"No one likes to be taken for granted" (p. 40).

"a greater volume of thanks is reported in highly innovative companies than in less innovative ones. Extraordinary achievements never bloom in barren and unappreciative settings" (p. 44).

Part 2: Relationships

"Leadership is a relationship. It's a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. . . . [L]eadership requires engaging others" (p. 48).

"Lasting success depends upon whether we *like* our leaders. It's only logical then that all leaders *should* want to be liked. . . . Being motivated to be liked will result in more enabling actions" (p. 48).

"Leaders have to learn to be flexible with style but firm on standards, especially in a world rich in diversity" (p. 49).

"Leading requires trust. . . . We have to constantly work at building it, nurturing it, and sustaining it" (p. 49).

"People want to decide things for themselves. People want to shape their own destiny. People want to be in charge of their own lives" (p. 49).

"If people are going to follow you they need to know more about you than the fact that you're their boss. They need to know something about who you are as a person - your hopes, dreams, talents, expectations, and loves" (p. 50).

"Leadership is personal" (p. 51).

"We're just more likely to trust people we know, and the more we know our leaders the more likely we are to trust them as human beings" (p. 52).

"all other things being equal we will work harder and more effectively for people we like. And we will like them in direct proportion to how they make us feel" (p. 57).

"The leaders people want to follow are the ones for whom they have genuine affection" (p. 58).

If we absolutely can't have both liking and respect, then we'll choose liking over respect" (p. 58).

"Likability is a major factor in being successful in just about every endeavor in life" (p. 58).

"The only person you control is yourself, and sometimes even that is in doubt" (p. 66).

"If we learn that our hearts may be in the same place, it'll be a lot easier to move forward" (p. 67).

"Not only were homogeneous groups more likely to be wrong, they were also more likely to express greater confidence in their answers despite being wrong!" (p. 68).

"one of the top impediments to career success is the inability to trust others" (p. 76).

Talk about values; be clear about norms (p. 76).

"we won't know what people are capable of if we don't give them the opportunity to grow and develop" (p. 82).

"The only effective approach to sustaining performance is to tap into people's natural drive for autonomy, and invite people to join in the adventure" (p. 82).

"Choice unleashes people's internal drive - and their leadership - to do what's necessary to make things happen" (p. 84).

"Part of our job as leaders is to engage people in grappling with the tension between freedom and constraint" (p. 85).

Part 3: Aspirations

"People commit to causes, not to plans" (p. 90).

"[L]eadership development is first and foremost self-development. Becoming a leader begins with an exploration of the inner territory as we search to find our own authentic voice. Leaders must decide on what matters in life, before they can live a life that matters" (p. 90).

"Leadership isn't about selling *your* vision; it's about articulating the people's vision" (p. 91).

"Inside-out leadership means becoming the author of your own story and the maker of your own history" (p. 92).

Questions for new leaders: (p. 93).

Who are you?

What do you stand for and believe in?

Where do you want to take us?

Why you?

What qualifies you for this job?

What makes you think you can do this?

Do you really know what you're getting yourself into?

What changes are you planning to make?

"People always want to know something about the person doing the leading before they're going to become the people doing the following" (p. 93).

"Developing ourselves as leaders begins with knowing our own key convictions; it begins with our value system" (p. 94).

"We must know who we are, what's important to us, and what is not" (p. 94).

"Clarity of personal values matters greatly to our feeling motivated, creative, and committed to our workplaces" (p. 96).

"*forward-looking* is second only to honesty as their most admired leader quality" (p. 99).

"the best place to start creating the future is by being more mindful in the present" (p. 103).

What makes leadership different than other roles is that leaders "spend less time on daily operations and more time on future possibilities" (p. 106).

People "want to hear about *their own* aspirations. They want to hear how their dreams will come true and their hopes will be fulfilled. They want to see themselves in the picture of the future that the leader is painting" (p. 108).

"To be able to describe a compelling image of the future, you have to be able to grasp what *others* want and need" (p. 111).

"Getting others excited about future possibilities is . . . about intimacy. It's about familiarity. It's about empathy" (p. 112).

"It's what you do with what you have before you die that's important" (pp. 117-118).

"The more we attribute leadership to a set of innate character traits, the more we abdicate our own responsibility to become the best we can be" (p. 118).

"the best leaders are self-aware enough to realize their limitations and secure enough to know they can let go of control and let others take charge" (p. 122).

"roles of leader and follower are often exchanged" (p. 123).

"The key to high performance is not only good leaders but also good leadership. It's not the person we should be focusing on; it's the process" (p. 124).

Part 4: Courage

"taking stands on things that matter. That's what it really means to live a courageous life" (p. 132).

courage: "the capacity to face danger without being overcome by fear" (p. 136).

"Courage required making a choice in the face of adversity" (p. 136).

Describe a "moment of courage" (p. 137).

"It took courage for me to . . ." (p. 138).

"Leadership is about taking people to places they've never been before, and we can't go to those places without courage. Leadership is *courage in action*" (p. 140).

"In what ways have you been courageous?" (p. 142).

"What are you most afraid of? What terrifies you? Why are you afraid, terrified, apprehensive, or distressed?" (p. 144).

"How ready are you to suffer for your cause?" (p. 146).

If there's one thing that seems to stop us from acting courageously, it's our unwillingness to suffer" (p. 147).

Achilles' heel of leaders

Believe they know it all.

Believe they are in charge.

Believe the rules don't apply to them.

Believe they will never fail.

Believe they did it all by themselves.

Believe they are better than the "little people."

Believe they *are* the organization.

Believe they can focus everything on the job. (p. 159)

"If you're not willing to fail at what you do, you'll never become great and you'll never innovate" (p. 164).

Michael Jordan observed: "I've missed more than nine thousand shots in my career. I've lost three hundred games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed" (p. 164).

Best hitters average little better than .300 (p. 165).

"Perseverance is the hallmark of innovators - and leaders" (p. 167).

"Life is our laboratory, and we ought to use it to conduct as many experiments as possible" (p. 168).

"Shared values can also become straightjackets, consensus on norms can become group-think, and communities can become cults that limit free choice" (p. 173).

"leaders should want to be liked. People just won't do their best for leaders with whom they don't feel a caring connection" (p. 179).

"Where there's a climate of trust, there's also a climate in which leaders can let go of control and grant everyone ownership of their own actions" (p. 179).