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**LEADERSHIP
CHALLENGE**

WES BERRY

keynote speaker | wordsmith

***Business
Quick
Reads***
Series Volume 3

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ICONS OF SUCCESS LEADERSHIP

By: Wes Berry

The culture of an enterprise is the responsibility of leadership. And without a culture of honesty, compassion, and boldness, the difficult times will overwhelm any hope of success.

Milton Hershey possessed all three of those qualities.

Hershey was an extraordinary entrepreneur who founded one of the most successful chocolate companies in the world. His impact extends far beyond the world of business, and his leadership style and commitment to social responsibility continue to inspire people to this day.

Hershey was born on September 13, 1857, in a small town in Pennsylvania. His parents were German immigrants, and his father worked as a carpenter. Hershey had a difficult childhood, and he struggled in school due to a learning disability. At the age of 14, Hershey dropped out of school and began working as an apprentice to a printer.

Despite his lack of formal education, Hershey had an entrepreneurial spirit from a young age. He tried his hand at several businesses before he found success in the world of candy making. In 1876, Hershey founded his first candy company, which he named the Lancaster Caramel Company.

The company was successful, and by the turn of the century, Hershey was a millionaire.

However, Hershey was not satisfied with just making caramels. He had a vision of creating a chocolate company that would produce high-quality chocolate at an affordable price. Hershey believed that everyone should be able to enjoy the taste of chocolate, not just the wealthy.

In 1893, Hershey attended the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where he saw the machinery used to make chocolate. He was fascinated by the process and knew that he had found his next venture. Hershey sold the Lancaster Caramel Company and used the proceeds to build his first chocolate factory in 1900 in Derry Township, Pennsylvania.

Hershey's new chocolate company was a success from the start. He was able to produce high-quality chocolate at an affordable price, thanks to

his innovative manufacturing process and his commitment to efficiency. Hershey was also known for his marketing genius, and he used advertising to create a demand for his products. However, Hershey's impact went far beyond the world of business.

Compassionate Leadership

Hershey was a firm believer in the power of community and believed that businesses had a responsibility to give back to the community to help create a better world for everyone. In 1903, Hershey established the Hershey Industrial School (now known as the Milton Hershey School), a school for orphaned boys. Hershey believed that education was the key to success, and he wanted to provide his students with a high-quality education that would prepare them for successful careers.

The Hershey Industrial School was just the beginning of Hershey's commitment to social responsibility. He built a model town, Hershey, Pennsylvania, to provide housing and other amenities for his workers. The town included schools, churches, a hospital, and even a park. Hershey also provided his employees with opportunities to learn new skills and advance in their careers.

During World War II, Hershey provided chocolate bars to American soldiers as part of their rations. He believed that the soldiers deserved a taste of home, and he wanted to support the war effort in any way he could.

Today, Hershey's leadership style and commitment to social responsibility continue to inspire business leaders and entrepreneurs around the world. Many companies have adopted Hershey's model of giving back to the community

and investing in education, and his philosophy of creating a better world through business is still relevant.

According to a study by the *Harvard Business Review*, companies that prioritize social responsibility and sustainability outperform their peers in the long term. Hershey's success is a testament to this philosophy, and his commitment to social responsibility helped him to build a successful business that has lasted for over a century.

In a recent article in *Forbes*, Hershey was named one of the most generous philanthropists in American history. His commitment to social responsibility and his belief in the power of education have left a lasting impact on the world, and his legacy continues to inspire generations of entrepreneurs and business leaders.

Hershey's leadership style was characterized by a hands-on approach, a commitment to innovation, and a deep sense of responsibility to his employees and his community. He was known for his innovative ideas and his willingness to take risks, even when others thought he was crazy.

Hershey's impact can still be seen today. The Hershey Company is still one of the largest producers of chocolate in the world, and the town of Hershey, Pennsylvania still exists as a model community. The Milton Hershey School continues to provide a high-quality education to students, and the Hershey Trust Company continues to manage Hershey's assets and invest in the community. Hershey's leadership style and commitment to social responsibility continue to inspire business leaders and entrepreneurs around the world. Many companies have adopted Hershey's model of giving

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Milton Hershey was an extraordinary entrepreneur and a visionary leader who believed that businesses had a responsibility to give back to the community. His commitment to social responsibility and his belief in the power of education have left a lasting impact on the world, and his legacy continues to inspire generations of business leaders today. Hershey's success is a testament to the power of innovation, community, and social responsibility, and his story serves as a reminder that businesses can be a force for good in the world.

Honest Leadership

In 2006, the Ford Motor Company was in trouble. On the brink of bankruptcy, this iconic American brand was on the ropes. Declining car sales had led to a financial crisis within the

company, and the public perception of the quality of Ford automobiles had plummeted.

Something needed to change—but first, they needed to find the right person to guide the company.

After being rebuffed by two other automobile executives, Ford made the bold and unconventional choice to turn to Boeing executive Alan Mulally. While he was new to the automotive industry, he didn't hesitate to begin taking steps to secure the future of his company.

Mulally took out a massive \$23.6 billion loan, putting up all of Ford's assets as collateral—including Ford's famous blue oval logo.

While this loan—which allowed Ford to avoid taking a government bailout in 2008—was a major part of the successful rejuvenation of the company, even more important was Mulally's transformation of Ford's corporate culture.

Early on, Mulally attended a weekly business status meeting. According to COO Mark Fields, Mulally noticed something strange from the very beginning. “Ford uses a color code for topics—green for good, yellow for a potential issue, red for a problem—and everything was green.” Mulally thought that odd for a company losing billions.

Fields himself had a problem with a new product launch, a liftgate issue with the new Ford Edge that could delay its release. “I said, ‘Code it red,’ and they said, ‘Are you sure you want to do that?’”

When it was Fields’ turn, he boldly labeled the Edge release red. “I could feel the chairs move away from the table,” Fields said. “I said, ‘We have a problem, and I’d love to have help from manufacturing and quality to help resolve it.’ Alan

turns to me and starts clapping. The next week, everybody's chart looks like a rainbow."

That single moment may have saved the Ford Motor Company from failing completely.

Before Mulally entered the picture, Ford looked like a poster child for a corporate culture of fear. Individuals were afraid to voice problems or concerns, afraid that they would be blamed. They feared they might find themselves no longer considered for promotions, or worse, out of a job. Instead, they kept their concerns to themselves, painting a Bob Ross-style picture full of happy little trees while the reality of the situation was much more dire.

Mulally encouraged a culture of openness, collaboration, and discussion. Rather than whitewashing any potential problems, he insisted that they be brought to everyone's attention as soon as possible. That way, issues could be dealt

with quickly, saving the company the headache of having to try to recover from mistakes by preventing them in the first place.

Still, Mulally exercised control over the meetings, making sure that every voice was heard and established a culture of respect. “They don’t bring their big books anymore, because I’m not going to grind them with as many questions as I can to humiliate them,” says Mulally. He also insists that everyone pays attention, which means no cell phones or side conversations are allowed. “If somebody starts to talk or they don’t respect each other, the meeting just stops. They know I’ve removed vice presidents because they couldn’t stop talking because they thought they were so damn important.”¹

Mulally’s focus on changing the culture at Ford paid dividends. The quality of their cars increased, and they avoided the difficulties faced

by other American automakers during the Great Recession, thanks in large part to an attitude shift that focused on solving problems rather than pretending that they don't exist.

The Mulally story is an excellent example of the ways that bold leadership can set the tone for an entire company.

Timid souls see the difficulty in every opportunity, while the bold see opportunity in every difficulty.

One person who makes a clear decision about the values of the company and the principles by which it acts, can set in motion a drastic change in how each person in a company thinks and behaves.

I can't overstate how important it is for business leaders to constantly be aware of their corporate culture. Everything starts from the top, and the style and tone of collaboration, teamwork, and integrity flows downhill.

Consider two companies. In Company A, the CEO acts unilaterally. They may consult others for their opinions, but just as often, they act on their own, making decisions that have a direct impact on the company's bottom line. They may be successful, but with the rest of the executives cut out of the decision-making process, there's no mechanism for communicating any problems that may be developing. Even if bad news does make it through, the messenger is usually held responsible.

In Company B, however, the CEO emphasizes collaboration with their executives. They consult frequently with their teams, asking for opinions and encouraging respectful debate. The decision-making process is transparent and inclusive, and each team member feels their views are respected, even if the CEO decides to go in another direction.

Now consider the corporate culture below the executive level. In Company A, the executives are more likely to be disengaged, concerned with protecting their position within the company. As a result, they treat their employees the same way, making spurious decisions and punishing any failures to avoid blame creeping uphill.

Company B, in contrast, will probably have a much more collaborative culture, encouraging each employee to think of themselves as stakeholders. These workers will likely be more engaged, and they tend to consider the interests of the company to be the same as their interests. The idea of punishment is abandoned in favor of encouragement, turning failures into opportunities for future success.

Now, which company would you rather be a part of?

This is especially true when it comes to a culture of honesty. By emphasizing the values and principles that guide your company, you reinforce a sense of honesty throughout your entire organization, from the leadership all the way through the rank and file.

When you model the right behavior and you emphasize the idea of mutual respect, then there's every reason to believe that your team will act with honesty, too.

Burn the Box – Bold and Unconventional

When it comes to bold, new, and unconventional individuals, perhaps no one fits the bill better than Lord Horatio Nelson. Born in 1758, Nelson joined the British Royal Navy as a young man and quickly rose through the ranks, taking command of his own ship at age 20. Nelson made a name for himself as an excellent military leader

with a fine strategic mind and bold leadership ability.

But what set Nelson apart from his fellow British military men was his bold and even unconventional behavior. Unlike his contemporaries, Nelson preferred to lead through love rather than intimidation, combining his personal courage and charisma with his commitment to understanding and addressing the needs of his crew and his superiors. Nelson had something of an independent streak, which would bolster him up well throughout his military career.

In one instance, during the Battle of Copenhagen, the British fleet took heavy fire from the Danish Navy, leading Nelson's superior Admiral Sir Hyde Parker to give the signal to retreat. Nelson, who had lost sight in his right eye at Calvi some years before, looked to his lieutenant and said, "You know, Foley . . . I have only one

eye. I have a right to be blind sometimes.” He put his spyglass to his ruined eye, looked about, and said, “I declare, I really do not see the signal.”² Nelson held on, and the Royal Navy was victorious. This is actually the origin of the expression “turning a blind eye.” Nelson went on to win a great victory and a few weeks later was dictating terms in Copenhagen.

Compared to his contemporaries, Nelson was a different kind of a leader, an original thinker who refused to be forced into a certain frame by the traditions of the British Royal Navy or society as a whole, for that matter. In 1797, for instance, Nelson began an affair with the married Lady Emma Hamilton.

While taking a lover was not unusual at the time, Nelson went a step further and actually left his wife, whom he did not love, for the woman that he did. Despite the social pressures that looked

down on such a deed (divorce was extremely stigmatized and illegal until the 19th century), Nelson felt compelled to follow his heart, no matter what others might say.

Nelson became perhaps the most highly regarded admiral in British history, largely because of his unconventionality. He wasn't afraid to take risks, he adjusted and adapted to setbacks in creative ways, and he led his forces with the kind of empathy that rendered sailors and soldiers willing to sacrifice their lives for the defense of their country. In short, Admiral Nelson was bold and didn't just think outside of the box—he refused to acknowledge that the box even existed.

What Is a Leader?

Like most things in life, in trying to define a leader, there's a simple answer, and there's the more complicated one. On the simplest, most basic

level, a leader is someone who . . . well, someone who leads others in the pursuit of a specific goal. That goal can be anything from victory on the battlefield to dominance in the business world, or even getting a group of friends out of an escape room.

While that definition of leadership is fine in a general sense, it leaves out a lot of the details we

Don't feel bad for outgrowing friends who had a chance to grow with you.

need to consider in order to think about how leadership actually works—in other words, what makes a leader? Is

leadership about taking control of a group? Is it about relentlessly pursuing a goal, whatever the consequences? Or is it pushing your team as hard as possible, attempting to get as much performance as you can?

I'm guessing you all know that I'm going to say no, it isn't any of those things.

Well, not those things specifically, at least. If leadership is about guiding a group of people to achieve a goal, then you can think of bold, unconventional leadership as guiding a group to do what others think is impossible.

We've all known leaders in our lives, good and bad. We've had bosses, parents, coaches, Boy or Girl Scout leaders, religious leaders, politicians, and so on. We've had the opportunity to observe how these people lead others in pursuit of a goal, and we've seen the successes and the setbacks they've gone through, which some have surely handled better than others. The great leaders to a person are bold and embrace unconventional ways and means; they burn the box.

Managers vs. Leaders

Often, the terms manager and leader get used interchangeably. For the most part, that's not that big a deal. Managers do often take on leadership responsibilities, and leaders will often have to manage people and situations. However, it's worth looking at the difference between the two, especially in learning how to practice unconventional leadership.

Think of a football team, specifically the quarterback. If you watch enough football and listen to the announcers, you've probably heard the term "game manager" more than once.

There are certain quarterbacks who are skilled enough to be on the football field, but they lack the transcendent athletic talent and the visionary abilities of the top-tier players at their position. The main responsibility of this game-manager-style quarterback is not to lose the game. They make smart passes, avoid costly turnovers,

and rely mostly on the running game for offense. These teams also usually rely on a stout defense to keep the other team out of the endzone, rather than on the quarterback, scoring a bunch of points.

On the other hand, you'll also find gunslingers, the guys who'll throw the ball all over the field. These players act boldly by taking chances and usually win much more than they lose. Gunslingers come in with the mindset that they're going to beat you. They're the ones who want the ball at the end of the game, knowing that when they have the ball in their hands, they can score in a matter of seconds.

In many ways, the game manager/gunslinger comparison is a lot like the comparison between a manager and a leader. Good managers know all of their responsibilities, all of the points they have to hit and the boxes they have

to check. They're motivated to finish everything by doing it the right way.

Leaders, on the other hand, are more like gunslinging quarterbacks. A true leader, in any situation, is the one who wants the ball in their hands when it counts. They thrive on the challenge of accomplishing the goal no matter what the circumstances, and they're willing to take some calculated risks to get there. They'll almost certainly make mistakes, but instead of crumbling or breaking down, bold leaders respond by learning from those mistakes and coming out even stronger.

There's nothing wrong with being a manager. The world needs people who can get jobs done efficiently. But the world needs bold leaders, too.

The best managers are the ones who can make the transition to the more demanding, more

challenging, and ultimately more satisfying role of leadership. As Peter Drucker says, “Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.”³

If you’re still asking yourself what makes a good leader, then you’re in exactly the right place. There’s no one-size-fits-all solution to leadership, no matter how many how-to guides or self-help books you read. After all, individuality and originality are key in bold, unconventional leadership.

When someone tries to prescribe a single vision of “the ideal leader,” what they’re really trying to do is build a box around you so tall that you can’t see outside of it.

When it comes to unconventional leadership, if you’re trying to think outside the box, you’ve already lost. That means you’re still thinking around the box, even if you’re not inside it.

Instead, you need to burn the box. Don't just step outside of it, don't merely knock it down. Burning the box frees you from preconceived notions of what it means to be a leader.

In its place, you have the freedom to define leadership for yourself. In this sense, bold unconventional leadership is a mindset, a way of thinking about your goals, how you want to achieve them, and how you're going to bring your team along with you. What follows are some guidelines to help you develop the right mindset to be a leader in any given situation.

Bold and Unconventional Leadership

There is no recipe to create the perfect leader. Different people have different styles of leadership, and what works in one situation might not work at all in another. Instead, the best way to develop unconventional leadership skills is to

invest in the qualities that allow you to bring your team to success. Let's take a look at a few:

Vision

Becoming a head coach wasn't easy for Tony Dungy. After a three-year playing career in Pittsburgh and San Francisco, Dungy became an assistant coach. He spent a total of 17 years coaching defenses. He interviewed four times for a head coaching spot, but it wasn't until the Tampa Bay Buccaneers came knocking in 1996 that he finally got the job he'd wanted for so long.

At that time, Tampa Bay was a failing franchise; their team name was synonymous with failure. The team hadn't made the playoffs since 1982, in which year they finished only 5-4 after a 57-day-long player strike shortened their season. Since then, the team had been mediocre at best.

They brought Dungy aboard to try and right the ship.

Dungy took a different approach from most coaches. Football is a game of strategy, of moves and countermoves. For most coaches, that means training players to make quick decisions based on their analysis of what's happening around them. Some players have to watch the ball, other players the clock. Everything in football happens in fractions of a second.

But Dungy saw things differently. He didn't want his players thinking much at all. Instead, Dungy wanted his Bucs to simply react based on situations and tactics he'd have them practice over and over. The goal was to play faster than the other team—to get in position faster, to make initial reads faster, and to execute faster. This would leave the other team vulnerable to making mistakes as they tried to catch up to the Bucs.

It took more than a full season before it really sank in for fans that the Bucs were actually winning. While Dungy was fired prematurely after the 2001 season, he watched the team he built win the Super Bowl the next year, all while he was instilling the same lessons in the Indianapolis Colts, who won the Super Bowl with him as head coach in 2007.

Dungy's bold and unconventional approach to coaching was what made his success possible in both Tampa Bay and Indianapolis. Thanks to his years of playing and coaching football, he had a deep understanding of the advantage his teams would have by simply thinking less and reacting more. He had the courage and the tenacity to pursue his vision of a successful football team, even when it flew in the face of the traditional coaching styles that players and front offices wanted (because they were familiar).

When it comes to leadership, having a goal is important . . . but not enough. What's more important is vision, which is how you intend to pursue your goal, including the timeline and mile markers.

Having vision as a leader means you're able to picture (in your mind) the necessary strategy to achieve a goal—from the broadest strokes to the finest details. Envisioning any potential setbacks you might encounter and how you might cope with them is key. Leaders with vision know how to establish a set of reasonable deadlines (it's not good to be overly ambitious and set your team up for failure). They also know how to establish signposts to help them measure progress.

A leader's vision empowers them to think strategically and consider each tactic as it relates to the overall goal. This means that some moves may seem counterintuitive. Consider Dungy's team that

first year. They lost game after game, but he remained determined to instill the right mindset in his team. He was facing pressure from the media, the fans, and many inside the Tampa Bay organization to change his methods. Dungy knew his tactics were working, and that his strategy would lead to more wins if he was given enough time.

Of course, it helps to have the courage to relentlessly pursue your vision, as well. Naturally, you may experience fear when trying something new. That fear can be good—it can drive you to work hard to limit your chances of failure. But, if you're not careful, it can also hold you back from pursuing your vision.

Paolo Coelho writes in his masterpiece *The Alchemist* that “the secret of life . . . is to fall seven times and to get up eight times.”⁴ Fear of failure is the only certain path to failure. If you let fear take

control of you, you'll never be able to achieve your vision. Be willing to fail—in fact, embrace the failure. Learn from your mistakes and defeats, and come back stronger and more prepared.

Flexibility

While having a clear, well-defined vision is critical to your success as a leader, don't let that vision become so rigid that it grows breakable, ready to shatter as soon as stress is applied. If your vision doesn't allow for stumbling blocks or hurdles, which are inevitable in every aspect of life, you might be surprised at how quickly everything can fall apart.

Just like a blacksmith has to balance strength with weight and resilience, leaders need to figure out how to pursue their distinct vision and be ready and able to react to setbacks.

This makes flexibility an invaluable quality for leaders. Without it, you won't be able to roll with the punches, and you might lose sight of your vision.

When you respond to a setback with determination instead of despair, you not only improve your chances of getting past it, but you inspire the rest of your team to rise up to the challenge, too.

Flexibility is also a valuable characteristic to have when it comes to managing a team, since a team is made up of diverse people with a wide array of strengths and weaknesses. The best leaders know how to leverage the strengths of each team member to offset the weaknesses of others without letting those strengths define each person. You'll see why this is important in the next section.

Empathy and Development

As a leader, it's all too easy to become hyper-focused on your vision and forget about the people you need in order to achieve your goal. The best leaders are the ones who balance that pursuit with the needs of their team, including their mental well-being and their professional development. This requires a good sense of empathy and intuition.

Your team is, of course, made of human beings. Like all other humans, they have needs and wants, and they go through good times and bad times. I'm not saying you have to be a therapist. That's the last thing I'd suggest. But you should be responsive to the needs of your team, and notice if someone appears to be struggling. Don't be afraid to ask questions in order to understand why someone's performance is not up to snuff. There's a good chance it's something very solvable.

As a leader, you should be demanding. Ask your team to give their all in pursuit of the overarching goal. Most of the time, people respond well to being challenged and enjoy the satisfaction of solving a really tough problem. In fact, those challenges go a long way to helping your team members develop the skills that will serve them—and you—in future projects.

It's important to recognize success and hard work and to be generous with praise. According to a 2019 Gallup poll, 52% of people leaving their job said their workplace could have done something to prevent them from leaving.⁵

In other words, for more than half of the people changing jobs, they left only because their organization wasn't responsive to their needs. Often, responsiveness simply means acknowledging the hard work your team is doing.

You'd be amazed how far a few kind words can go.

Communication

No matter how strongly you embody your vision, or how deeply you feel appreciation for your team, the whole thing can easily be derailed by poor communication. Whether it's a poorly worded email that causes anxiety among your team, a vague and uninformative press release, or a lackluster speech, bad communication can weaken your message and crush your vision. Worst of all, it may cause your team to lose faith in your ability to lead.

While you should be able to craft clear and concise written communications, the most important area of communication for leaders is public speaking.

Public speaking is about more than just transmitting information—it's about transmitting energy. You can deliver the same words in the same place at the same time, but if your speech is uninspiring, the result will be disappointing.

Consider Steve Jobs, whose Apple keynotes were legendary. He knew that his product announcements weren't just about showing people the new offerings from his company. The real focus of his keynotes was to build momentum for his products, focusing less on the technical capabilities and more on how they would fundamentally transform a customer's life. While the iPhone might have been a success regardless, there's no denying the impact Jobs made during his speeches on iPhone sales.

Now, I'm not saying you have to be Steve Jobs. You just need to learn how to be yourself in front of people and to communicate clearly and

effectively, all while inspiring confidence and energy in your listeners. You might consider a public speaking course at a local college, or else participating in Toastmasters International. No matter how you do it, investing in your public speaking skills is an investment in your leadership skills.

Creativity

According to former Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh, creativity is what separates unconventional entrepreneurs from more traditionally oriented businesspeople.

“What I love about being an entrepreneur is that it’s really about creativity,” he told CNBC. “I think that people . . . love being handed a bunch of different constraints and then try to figure out what to do with it—those are the people that want to be entrepreneurs.”⁶

When Hsieh came onboard at Zappos in 2000, the company totaled \$1.6 million in sales. In 2009, that total was over \$1 billion. What made this possible was Hsieh's creative approach to making online shoe shopping as easy and comfortable as possible, while also focusing on creating a positive work experience.

It was this creativity and openness that led Hsieh to institute a new organizational management structure in 2013. Dubbed "holacracy," Zappos embraced a decentralized structure that had employees "self-manage" so administrators could keep their focus on the company's larger goals. While the company still has a leadership structure to determine goals and implement strategy, by and large Hsieh empowered employees to become stakeholders in the company. This has led to Zappos being

frequently listed as one of America's best places to work.

If you want to talk about burning the box, here's a great example. Hsieh took a company that was already very successful and completely changed the corporate structure in a very unique, creative way in order to make his company function better and more efficiently. Refusing to be constrained by corporate tradition, Hsieh took a risk and turned his company into one of the best workplaces in the country.

When it comes to determining your vision and your strategic approaches, it's in your best interest to embrace creativity. Look for ideas that are so far outside of the box they may be unrecognizable. Of course, just having the idea doesn't mean you need to implement it. But it could lead you to a new, even better idea. One that might pay unexpected dividends.

The best way to train your creativity is to develop a lifelong commitment to learning. Read everything you can, from academic papers to trade magazines. Attend conferences and lectures, watch interviews online, and talk to absolutely everyone. Not only will this help you stay on the cutting edge of your industry and keep up with new technology and emerging trends, but it can also give you the spark you need to develop your own ideas.

Competitiveness

On some level it goes without saying that, if you're in business, you are competitive. Most people who lack drive end up stalled somewhere along the way, usually somewhere in middle management. If you're not competitive, you're not really a leader.

But competitiveness is also a natural byproduct of embracing the five characteristics I

just laid out. The difference is that you'll be competing as an unconventional leader. Be like Tony Dungy's teams were: faster, more responsive, ready to react. Be a lean, mean leading machine.

Keep in mind that you can be too competitive and overdo the "doing it alone" part of leadership. This can limit your success and sometimes means your ego has replaced your vision. When you leave your ego out of the equation, you'll be more willing to accept you're not perfect and that perhaps you could use advice or insight from an outside source.

Leaders Are Human Beings, Too

No matter how much they might deny it, leaders are people, too, and they have strengths and failings like anyone else. I'd like to take just a

moment to look at two pieces of advice for leaders on how they should carry themselves.

Humility

There are few things worse than an arrogant leader—especially one who has no reason to be arrogant. Even if you’ve earned the right to be proud of your achievements, you can quickly do damage to your team’s morale by holding yourself superior.

Instead, the best leaders are humble, crediting their team for their successes and shouldering the blame themselves. This can be a challenge, of course, since no one likes to take blame. But this kind of humility is actually a reflection of strength. Only those who are afraid of failure are willing to point the finger at their team. Those with inner strength and self-assurance are willing to shoulder responsibility.

Integrity

Hold onto your integrity at all costs. I'm serious. No matter how much we'd like to believe that this should go unsaid, the fact is that it's surprisingly easy to let matters of integrity slide. It can be as simple as making a small promise that you aren't able to keep.

While it may seem like an insignificant thing to you, the fact is that people will remember. If you lose your integrity, it can be almost impossible to recover it.

In any relationship, whether at home or at work, your integrity represents the value of your word. If you let that value diminish, major distrust will likely spread among your team. Before you realize it, you'll have lost influence over people and situations. When you maintain your integrity, then no matter what else happens, you can still

look at yourself in the mirror and know that you remained true to yourself and your values.

What It Means to Be a Leader

As I said before, there's no one type of "perfect" leader. It's a mindset and a methodology for getting a group of people—each with their own identity and interests—to work together in pursuit of a larger, universal goal. There are infinite paths to be taken toward achieving that goal, and your job as a leader is to make sure you all work together in following one of those paths.

No matter what, leadership isn't about learning to be someone else. It's about being the best possible version of yourself, a tactic you can then use to pursue your vision alongside your team. When you lead by example, you're providing a model for your team to follow. You set the tone,

you set the goal, and you set the strategy. But it's the team that has to execute.

When you're developing your leadership style, it's fine to be inspired by other great leaders of history. But don't be afraid to burn the box, to step outside of the traditional forms of leadership and corporate structure in order to find what's best for you and your vision. You have to decide for yourself what it means to be an unconventional leader. Once you do, you have the means necessary to accomplish the impossible.

7-Day Leadership Challenge

Why Accept this Challenge?

There are five main reasons to accept this 7-Day Challenge, particularly one presented by the author of a book you are reading:

- 1. Personal growth:** By taking on a challenge, you can push yourself to learn and develop new skills, which can help you grow both personally and professionally.

2. Improved performance: A challenge can motivate you to improve your performance and achieve better results, which can benefit both you and your organization.

3. Increased insight: A challenge can force you to focus your attention on a specific area, leading to deeper understanding and greater insight. This can help you make more informed decisions and drive innovation in your organization.

4. Satisfaction of fulfilling a challenging task: Successfully completing a challenge can give you a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction that comes from overcoming obstacles and achieving a difficult goal. This can boost your confidence and inspire you to take on new challenges in the future.

5. Mastering the Secret of Desire: By applying yourself to these challenges you will

complete the journey of discovery that is the promise of this book.

In the case of a challenge presented by the author of a book you are reading, accepting the challenge can also provide a unique opportunity to learn from an expert in the field and apply the insights and strategies presented in the book to real-world scenarios. This can help you deepen your understanding of the material and enhance your ability to apply it in your own work.

Day 1: Define Leadership and its Importance

Leadership is the ability to inspire, influence, and guide others towards a common goal or objective. It involves taking the initiative to make decisions, set direction, and mobilize resources. Leadership is crucial for any organization's success because it sets the tone for the culture, inspires employees, and ensures that the team stays on track towards achieving its objectives. Without effective leadership, organizations can flounder, lose direction, and ultimately fail.

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Day 2: Focus on Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership is an approach that emphasizes working together to achieve a common goal. Instead of relying on a top-down approach, collaborative leadership involves engaging employees, asking for their opinions, and encouraging respectful debate. This approach helps to create a more inclusive and transparent decision-making process that ensures everyone's views are respected. As a result, teams tend to be more engaged, and employees are more likely to consider themselves stakeholders in the organization's success.

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Day 3: Develop a Culture of Honesty

Honesty is crucial for any successful organization. Leaders should prioritize honesty in all interactions, from the executive level to the rank and file. By modeling the right behavior and emphasizing mutual respect, leaders can create a culture of honesty that permeates the entire organization. When employees feel that they can be honest and open, they are more likely to communicate effectively, collaborate, and work towards achieving the organization's objectives.

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Day 4: Invest in Empathy and Development

As a leader, it's essential to balance your vision and goals with the needs of your team. This requires empathy, intuition, and the ability to develop your employees both personally and professionally. By investing in your team's well-being and development, you can inspire them to work harder, stay motivated, and achieve their full potential. Good leaders recognize the value of each employee and help them to grow and thrive.

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Day 5: Focus on Communication

Effective communication is critical for any successful leader. Poor communication can cause confusion, anxiety, and a lack of direction. Leaders should prioritize communication at all levels, ensuring that their messages are clear, concise, and easily understood. This requires both written and verbal communication skills, as well as active listening and the ability to adapt your communication style to your audience.

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Day 6: Emphasize Bold and Unconventional Leadership

Leadership is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Different situations require different styles of leadership, and successful leaders are those who can adapt and think outside the box. Leaders who are willing to take risks, challenge the status quo, and embrace change are more likely to succeed in today's rapidly changing business environment. This requires a willingness to be bold and unconventional, to think creatively, and to encourage others to do the same.

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Day 7: Contemplation Day

On the final day of the challenge, take some time to reflect on your leadership style and the lessons you have learned. Consider areas where you can improve and set goals for your ongoing development as a leader. Remember that leadership is a continuous journey, and there is always more to learn and achieve. Take the time to celebrate your successes and commit to being the best leader you can be.

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In conclusion, achieving and maintaining this quality of leadership requires intentional effort and self-reflection. By setting clear goals, communicating effectively, leading by example, empowering your team, building relationships, learning and growing, and taking time for contemplation and reflection, you can become a more effective and successful leader. Use these seven days as a starting point for your leadership journey, and continue to challenge yourself to improve and grow as a leader.

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About The Author

Wes Berry is a Keynote Speaker and Workshop Facilitator with the professional skills and real-life experience to deliver on any stage. He works with Fortune 500 companies like Johnson & Johnson to smaller businesses and associations of all sizes that are seeking a breakthrough experience. Wes changes lives and transforms organizations by delivering a Paradigm Shift. He has written sixteen business and success books and is a *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author and TEDx speaker. As an entrepreneur, he built a \$750 million international company that operated in 130 countries.

His business knowledge and communications skills have made him an expert media contributor on many topics, from

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