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HBR's 10 Must Read on Leadership [review] / Harvard Business Review

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HBR'S 10 MUST READS ON LEADERSHIP

*By Harvard Business Review
Boston, MA: Harvard Business
Review Press (2011)
Paperback, 217 pages
Reviewed by TONNIE KATSEKERA*

HBR's 10 Must Reads on Leadership, a compilation of arguably some of the best writing on leadership, discusses ideas and skills that differentiate great leaders from merely good ones. The first chapter places Daniel Goleman's discussion of emotional intelligence at the top of the list. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a term that refers to a combination of five skills that "enable the best leaders to maximize their own and their followers' performance" (p. 3) (Review, 2011, p. 3). These skills include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The good news about these skills, which are key to successful and effective leadership in any organization, is that they are not innate; rather, they can be learned.

In Chapter 2, Peter F. Drucker asserts that successful and effective leaders also have one thing in common: they get the right things done in the right ways by following eight simple rules. They ask themselves questions about what needs to be done, and about what's right for the enterprise. They develop action plans, take responsibility for decisions, take responsibility for communicating, and focus on opportunities as opposed to problems. They run productive meetings, and they think and say "we" and not "I." In addition, great leaders listen first and speak last.

In the next chapters, John P. Kotter differentiates leadership from management, and Ronald A. Heifetz and Donald L. Laurie argue that leading in

doing adaptive work is also critical in successful and effective leadership. Leadership is different from management. Successful leaders always make sure the difference is clear; otherwise, they may spend their time and effort doing the work of a manager. While management is about "coping with complexity—bringing order and predictability to a situation, leadership is about learning how to cope with rapid change." (Review, p. 39) While management involves planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, control, and problem solving, leadership involves setting direction, aligning people, and motivation. A company or organization needs both skills in order to succeed (Review, p. 39). Also, because of the challenges companies and organizations are facing today "due to shifting markets, stiffening competition and emerging technologies" (Review, p. 39) (p. 39), it is critical that they adapt their behaviors if they are to thrive in such new business environments. Getting people to do adaptive work is the work of leadership in a competitive business world, and this requires the skills of a successful leader.

According to Robert Goffee and Gareth Jones (Chapter 5), leaders who inspire other people to follow them also share another four qualities: they selectively show their weaknesses, they rely heavily on intuition to gauge the appropriate timing of their action, they manage employees with tough empathy, and they reveal their differences. Jim Collins (Chapter 7) adds to this discussion by arguing that most effective and successful leaders fall under what is termed as the category of "Level 5" leadership. He defines Level 5 leaders as those who synthesize the paradoxical combination of profound personal humility with intense professional will. Great transformations cannot take place in a

company or organization without Level 5 leaders on the wheel (p. 117) (Review, p. 117). Are these “Level 5” leadership qualities not the same with what in Christian leadership is known as “Servant Leadership,” which also is based heavily on humility?

The role of leadership, like many other roles, is not without trials or tests (crucibles), but how the leader views the crucibles and reacts to them is what makes the difference. According to Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas (Chapter 6), leaders who move from good to great view crucibles as transformative events from which they learn. There are four skills which will enable leaders to learn from hardship: engage others in shared meaning, have a distinctive and compelling voice, have a sense of integrity, and have an adaptive capacity.

It is the combination of hardiness and ability to grasp context that, above all, allows a person to not only survive an ordeal, but to learn from it, and to emerge stronger, more engaged, and more committed than ever. These attributes allow leaders to grow from their crucibles, instead of being destroyed by them—to find opportunity where others might find despair. This is the stuff of true leadership (Review, pp. 112-113). (pp. 112-113)

Another quality that differentiates great leaders from good ones is what most developmental psychologists call their “action logic”—how they interpret their own behavior and other people’s behavior, and how they react when their power or safety is challenged. According to David Rooke and William Torbert (Chapter 8), seven developmental action logics function as a leader’s dominant way of thinking. These include opportunist, diplomat, expert, achiever, individualist, strategist, and alchemist. Alchemist is the best action logic a leader can have, but

very few leaders have this quality. Next to the alchemist is the strategist. These two are highly effective change agents.

The *Harvard Business Review* has done a good job in developing this book. It is written in clear and easy to understand language. After each chapter’s introduction, there are two sections called idea in brief and idea in practice. The first section gives the overview of the chapter while the second gives an elaboration of the main points of the chapter. These help the reader to better understand what the chapter is all about, and to follow the facts easily as he/she reads. The strength of the book lies in the fact that all the ideas discussed in it have been tested and proven effective by research, and that the ideas and the skills discussed have a universal application. The weakness of this book lies in the fact that it has no introduction or preface. Although the ten collected articles could each stand alone, the editors still ought to have introduced the book to the readers to give them a glimpse of what is inside. Nevertheless, the book is a masterpiece summary on leadership, one that I recommend to all who lead or aspire to lead.

LEADING WITH CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE: THE NEW SECRET TO SUCCESS

By David A. Livermore
New York, NY: American Management Association (2010)
Hardcover, 220 pages
Reviewed by UGOCHUKWU ELEMS

In *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, David Livermore states that about 70% of cross-cultural ventures end up in failure. Any statistical report with such a percentage of failure obviously commands attention. It is upon this