

Remarkable Leadership: Unleashing Your Leadership Potential One Skill at a Time

**Excerpt of Chapter 1:
The Leader in You**

My Goal

This book is designed to help you identify the parts of your personal leadership package working in your favor and help you develop those parts, and any others you wish to work on, to become the leader you are capable of becoming. In other words, my goal is to help you become a remarkable leader by unleashing the leadership potential that is already within you.

A secondary goal of this book, which may not be quite as obvious, is to help you develop leaders around you. Remarkable leaders are those who lead *and* develop others, and this book will help you do that as well.

My Philosophy

When I read a book, I always appreciate knowing the author's perspective and philosophy. Once I learn an author's underlying beliefs, I am in a better position to learn from him or her. I've actually already shared part of that philosophy, but here is some more context.

Our Potential Is Vast

Think about the last time you were in a room of people where a baby was present. Where was most of the focus in the room? On the baby, of course! We all are drawn to babies, like metal to a magnet. We all sense that there is something magical about their presence. However, on a purely logical level, this doesn't make much sense.

Babies cry. Babies smell (really bad) sometimes. Babies are high maintenance. And they aren't attractive by the standards we use to determine physical attractiveness in adults. Yet we are still drawn to them. We want to look at them (or their pictures in their absence). We want to hold them, smile at them, and talk to them in strange voices. Why is this true? Because deep down we know that every baby we hold, every baby we look at, every baby we hear has the chance to be anyone and anything. That baby could be a president of the United States, a Nobel Prize-winning scientist, a best-selling author, a preacher, a teacher, a star athlete—anyone. We know that a baby's potential is limitless.

Because you were once a baby too, that same limitless potential that we know resides in babies still resides in us. Our potential is vast: we are capable of far more than we can ever imagine. This potential exists in all parts of our life, including our potential to be a truly remarkable leader.

We Can Choose

One of the most valuable abilities we all have—something that distinguishes humans from other animals—is the ability to choose. We make choices all day, every day. Many are subconscious and taken for granted, but we can choose how to respond to a situation, what to say, and how to view something. We also have the power to make a choice to learn and grow, or to stay and stagnate.

This book is about helping you use your power of choice wisely to help you become a remarkable leader.

Opportunities Abound

Chances are you are reading this book because you want to become a more effective leader in one part of your life: at work, in your church, in a volunteer organization, or in some other role. Having a focus is a perfect way to approach this book, but you shouldn't limit your view.

The skills of a leader are transferable across all the roles you play in all parts of your life. So while you may read this book through the lenses of your leadership role at work, recognize that you can practice and use those skills in your community, in your church, with your neighbors, and even at home.

We Shouldn't Settle

If you believe, even if only intellectually at this point, that your potential is huge, then it should be easy to see why you shouldn't settle for less than your best. You didn't decide to read this book because you thought you could be a slightly-better-than-mediocre leader. You didn't decide to learn more about leadership skills so you could get by. Deep down you know you can be remarkable. You shouldn't settle for anything less than your best self, reaching ever closer to your potential—whether as a leader or in any other part of your life.

This isn't the time or the place for compromise. Now is the time to take action to become what you are capable of being. This book is about helping you move up your ladder of success, increasing your confidence and competence as a leader—to become remarkable.

What Are the Skills?

Before you read any further, get a mental picture of a person you consider a remarkable leader: a person who personifies leadership to you. This

person can be living or dead, someone you know well or have worked with or someone you have only read about or observed from afar. Once you have that person in your mind, write his or her name below.

My remarkable role model leader:

Now write down five skills, attributes, behaviors, or habits that make this person a model of leadership for you:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

We all have a picture in our mind's eye of what a great leader looks like or of how a great leader behaves. You've just now identified part of your personal picture.

Organizations build these pictures too. They are reinforced through culture and often codified by a list of leadership competencies or leadership behaviors used to describe the traits they value and use to evaluate potential leaders within the organization. Each organization has a different list of competencies. The lists I've seen range from five to twenty-three competencies. In the end, although those skills may be stated somewhat differently, there are some core skills or competencies that usually are included. This book focuses on thirteen of those core competencies:

- Remarkable leaders learn continually.
- Remarkable leaders champion change.
- Remarkable leaders communicate powerfully.
- Remarkable leaders build relationships.
- Remarkable leaders develop others.
- Remarkable leaders focus on customers.
- Remarkable leaders influence with impact.
- Remarkable leaders think and act innovatively.
- Remarkable leaders value collaboration and teamwork.
- Remarkable leaders solve problems and make decisions.

- Remarkable leaders take responsibility and have accountability.
- Remarkable leaders manage projects and processes successfully.
- Remarkable leaders set goals and support goal achievement.

These are the competencies I have identified through experience, consultation, observation, and study as those broad, core competencies that lead to remarkable leaders.

What Makes a Leader Remarkable?

I recently spent time with a Canadian client group that included many hockey fans. I asked them who the greatest hockey player of all time was. After some good-natured teasing and verbal jousting, they agreed that if it wasn't Wayne Gretzky, he was clearly one of the greatest.

I then asked them if he was the greatest skater, the fastest skater, the best defenseman, the best goal tender, or the most physical player ever. On each of these questions, the whole group answered no: they agreed that he was none of these things.

Then I asked if he was the best passer, the best scorer, the best at anticipating where play was going, and the most competitive ever to play the game. These answers were much different from the ones to my first set of questions. Although there wasn't complete consensus on each of these, there was general agreement that Gretzky was the best, or among the very best, in hockey history at these skills.

This led to an interesting discussion about strengths, weaknesses, and greatness. The group determined that it wasn't necessary that the greatest player be the greatest at every individual skill. In fact they generally agreed that there were some skills where Gretzky was far from the best.

If I had asked people to write down what they thought of when asked to think about Gretzky, they would have written down all of his great strengths and not mentioned any of his weaknesses at all.

Think about the outstanding leader you identified a minute ago. When you thought of your role model leader, did you focus on what he isn't good at, or did you remember and marvel at all that she is best at?

I'll bet your results aren't very different from my hockey loving participants.

What makes us remarkable are those skills at which we truly excel. What makes *you* remarkable are those things at which *you* truly excel.

If you have two or more skills at which you truly excel, you will likely be seen by others as highly effective. This is true for a sport, a hobby, or any other endeavor, including leadership.