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-PROFESSOR LEE DYER, ILR School, Cornell University

LEAD LIKE IT MATTERS

**BECAUSE
IT
DOES**

Practical Leadership
Tools to Inspire and Engage
Your People and Create Great Results

ROXI BAHAR HEWERTSON

Lead Like It Matters... Because It Does

Practical Leadership Tools
to Inspire and Engage Your People
and Create Great Results!

ROxI BAHAR HEWERTSON



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Introduction

The game of life is like a boomerang. Our thoughts, deeds and words return to us sooner or later, with astounding accuracy.

—Florence Shinn

Fact 1: People are messy. Groups are messy. These truths are never going to change.

Fact 2: We all know what good and bad leadership looks like and feels like. These truths are unlikely to change.

Fact 3: Today, we continue to have a few great leaders, some pretty good leaders, and bucket loads of people in positions of authority who are mediocre, incompetent, or worse at leadership. These truths can change.

If you doubt Fact 3 even a little, consider the mismanagement, lack of leadership, corruption, pain, suffering, and financial disasters that failed leadership has caused in Lehman Brothers, British Petroleum, the U.S. Congress, Syria, AIG, Enron, WorldCom, Fannie Mae, J.P. Morgan, the Catholic Church, Penn State . . . the list goes on and on, with new revelations about failed leadership every day, in every walk of life, with a trail of tears following each one.

You would not let a surgeon operate without her proving that she had the necessary skill set to preserve human life. Yet, even though we know that leaders have a significant impact on people's lives and well-being, we allow them to operate in their sphere of influence without having to prove that they have the skill set or the integrity to lead anyone anywhere. Naming a star player as the new coach of the rest of the players is an act of madness unless that player has the leadership skill set and attitude needed to make that switch. When it works, it is often by luck, not by design. This does not make any kind of good business or common sense.

We need a revolutionary approach to today's global leadership crisis because business as usual is not working and will no longer address the needs of our world. We all deserve far better than what we have gotten

for hundreds, if not thousands, of years in our businesses, houses of worship, higher education, governments, public schools, healthcare—really, everywhere. We need a new norm and culture within leadership that says, “If you are going to lead other people and mess around in their lives, you must first prove that you have the skill set to perform that essential part of your job well.”

Let’s take a quick look at reality. Here is a sampling of what has been reported about today’s workplace and workforce. In a recent Development Dimensions International (DDI) global study, “Driving Workplace Performance Through High-Quality Conversations: What Leaders Must Do Every Day to Be Effective,” DDI assessed thousands of senior and frontline leaders over 10 years based on observations of actual leadership behaviors. The 2013 study validates how important Emotional Intelligence competencies, particularly self-awareness and social skills, are in human interactions. Here is a sampling of the eye-popping results.¹

- Only 11 percent of senior executives and 10 percent of frontline leaders are effective in conveying performance expectations and facilitating clear agreement on next steps.
- Only 10 percent of senior executives are highly effective at inviting ideas from others, and only a paltry 7 percent do a good job of gaining others’ commitment.
- Only 6 percent of frontline leaders are highly effective in asking questions and facilitating involvement, and only 11 percent do a good job of demonstrating interpersonal diplomacy.
- Only 24 percent of frontline leaders are highly effective in responding to cues for maintaining others’ self-esteem, and only 38 percent demonstrated empathy.
- Only 5 percent of senior executives are highly effective in disclosing and sharing their thoughts and feelings with others, one of the most powerful methods of building trust.

A large 2012 Manpower Survey said that a whopping 65 percent of employees are dissatisfied at work.²

In June 2013, the results of a comprehensive study of 150,000 full- and part-time workers during 2012 from Gallup’s “State of the American Workplace Report”³ were reported in the *New York Daily News*⁴ and *Today*

Money.⁵ The Gallup report tells us that workplace morale is horrible, with a shocking 70 percent of Americans feeling negative about their jobs. For a deeper understanding of the economic impact of these findings, I highly recommend reading the entire Gallup report. Here are just a few highlights cited:

- Only 30 percent of employees are engaged and inspired at work.
- About 52 percent of employees are present, but not engaged.
- A full 18 percent are actively disengaged or worse.
- As much as \$550 billion in productivity is lost because of that 18 percent of actively disengaged employees.

These are compelling reasons why we need to *lead like it matters . . . because it does!* No kidding; no fooling.

You or someone close to you has probably been affected by an ineffective or even toxic leader. You may have observed or experienced a highly dysfunctional work culture. I'm going to assume, because you are reading this book, that you want to become or remain a member of the minority of "highly effective leaders" that I hope will some day become the majority!

There is no question in my mind that you are really good at a lot of things. It is also a safe bet that you have some gaps in your leadership skills that you could and should address. Am I right? Do you know what they are? It's all right. We all have gaps—we are human.

No matter where you are in your leadership journey today, this handbook of proven (over decades of testing and practice) and practical everyday "how to" tools and skills can be applied to raise your bar significantly, measurably, and consistently.

I am your tour guide; *you* are driving the bus. I have excellent maps. Your job is to read them and then personalize each one. Just as in any venture, your intrinsic motivation will have a direct impact on your success, plain and simple.

For a long time I called this book *The Ripple Effect*. I began by thinking about the age-old pastime of skipping stones across a pond. Each time a stone hits the water, the impact causes a ripple, and then a circular motion fans out, changing the body of water. Depending on the skill of the "skipper," a few or many new ripples are created. Regardless of the skipper's skill, there is at least one "kerplunk" and one set of ripples.

This playful activity teaches us, at a young age and in a subtle way, one of the most important lessons of leadership: that action has impact. As in nature, leaders' behaviors have a significant impact on their teams, their organizations, their families, and the world we work and live in every day. I often sum it up this way: a leader's behavior creates an impact similar to that of a pebble (or boulder) landing on a pond. Everything within the pond reacts to the impact. The ripples grow and spread until they reach the boundaries of their influence. So it goes with leaders, regardless of their intent.

There's more. When I observed those ripples more carefully, I noticed that they eventually returned to their place of origin. As in nature, the ripples (good or not so good) we create will come back to us, sooner or later. It follows, then, that it is in our best interest to get this thing called leadership as right as possible.

Learning how to generate a positive ripple effect must be a top priority for anyone who accepts a leadership role and wishes to succeed. In 35 years of leading, coaching, and teaching, I have not met even one person who wanted to be ineffective, incompetent, or unsuccessful. No one has ever said, "Roxi, please tell me how to lower morale and make my staff disengage and become more discontented." Not one single person has retained me to help him create a toxic culture in his organization. And never once has anyone asked me to help her lower productivity and profitability.

Of course, the opposite is true. People want to lead well; they care about making a positive difference within their sphere of influence or "pond," no matter where they work. People want to succeed. More often than not, they just don't know how.

It's not so much what leadership *is* that matters; it's what leaders *do* that matters.

There are a lot of books on the shelves that talk about what good or great leadership and management is and is not. There are excellent theories, models, and studies, some of which I will share with you. But it is often difficult, if not impossible, to figure out how to integrate all that good information and apply it to your work and your life. Sadly, there is very little practical help on how to actually *do* the day-to-day job of leading other people. Most of us are not CEOs of huge Fortune 500 corporations. They have access to all the leadership training and development resources

that anyone could ever want. Whether they take advantage of those opportunities or not is a different question.

My goal is to help fill that gap so that you can navigate the challenges that arise every day in leadership more successfully. This is the primary reason that I wrote this book and continue to teach my courses.

There is also one more reason.

I would like you to help me go out of business! I am dead serious. Nothing would make me happier than to wake up tomorrow morning and discover that no one needed my help, coaching, advice, or intervention—because that would mean that every leader everywhere was putting into practice the advice and tools that he or she needed to lead well. Imagine what a different world it would be!

In the meantime, within these pages, you will find, in very practical terms, the tools you need to liberate and empower the leader within you.

Much of what you will read here about leading well, I have learned from my mentors, teachers, direct reports, bosses, clients, and students. After decades of practice and study, I am very clear about what works and what does not work. It has become my life's purpose to share what I know. Along the way, I've tripped into and over many epiphanies, even been smacked upside the head by them! Let's begin with eight "aha" leadership insights that have helped shape my understanding of the challenges that leaders face. While some of these may seem obvious, some may surprise you. I will explain each of them in Part 1.

- Insight 1: Knowing is the easy part. Doing is the hard part.
- Insight 2: Leading people is messy!
- Insight 3: Leadership is a *discipline*, not an accident.
- Insight 4: Leading and Individual Contribution require opposite skill sets and motivations.
- Insight 5: Leading is all about relationships!
- Insight 6: Learning the "soft skills" is hard!
- Insight 7: Most change efforts fail, and they don't have to.
- Insight 8: Leaders create and destroy cultures.

Then we'll move on to the *four core masteries* in which every leader needs to attain reasonable competence. These masteries will address all eight insights and more.

Personal Mastery. This is discovering who you are as a leader: your Emotional Intelligence; your style and preferences; your life purpose, values, and vision; and how you can and do impact others. This mastery will help you take an authentic look at yourself, past, present, and future. Here we will look at your leadership style, your intent versus your impact, how you arrived in the life and work where you are today, and finally, what really matters to you.

Interpersonal Mastery. This is discovering how you communicate and interact with others. We will work on several dialogue skills. These difficult “soft skills” are essential to successful leadership. We will focus on how to deeply listen, provide important and constructive feedback, and manage and transform conflicts.

Team Mastery. This is discovering how your team works and how its members work together and with you. We will focus on building teams from the ground up and/or maintaining high-functioning teams. We will discover the nature and power of group dynamics, decision making that works, delegation for development, and meetings that produce great results. You will get tools that will help you facilitate productive activities to increase team success.

Culture and Systems Mastery. This is discovering how your system and your organizational culture operate. Since you and your team affect others and others affect you, we will look closely at what is happening in your culture, including a cultural assessment tool I call the C.A.T. Scan. We will explore what can happen inside systems that will blow them up or make them stronger. We'll look at a cure for fragile cultures and focus on how to successfully lead change in your system, while ensuring accountability for results. Finally, we will gain an understanding of the nature of courage for yourself, and how to measure it in yourself, your teams, and your organization.

After decades of helping leaders with many similar challenges, my goal with this book is to focus on those areas that cause the most angst and pain for the most people, regardless of their industry or job title. While we cover more than the 10 skills I am listing here, these are the skill areas with which leaders seem to have the most difficulty. If all we do together is help you to be more effective with even one, two, or three of these, you will see an immediate return on your investment of time, energy, and the price of this book!

Here are 10 “how to” skills you will have in your new toolbox when you finish this book:

- Leverage your strengths and mitigate gaps in your style and skill set.
- Create a compelling and effective mission, vision, and set of values for yourself and your team.
- Cut wasteful meetings out of your life and lead effective, productive ones.
- Create constructive dialogues, including managing up and delegation.
- Facilitate effective team building.
- Decide how to decide with confidence.
- Prevent conflicts and/or address them quickly and gracefully.
- Learn how to assess your culture.
- Lead change initiatives that are not dead on arrival.
- Engage your employees and increase productivity and accountability.

All the exercises and activities we will do together are intended to help you save time, not lose it or waste it. Learning is already part of what you do every day. Do you read the paper, watch the news, or attend workshops, seminars, or conferences? Do you read instructions on how to put together a special menu, a bookshelf, or something else? Of course you do. Going through this process, you should find that you are working smarter, not harder, and you will be more confident and joyful at work.

The whole idea is to make it simple. Notice that I did not say easy. Becoming a great or even reasonably effective leader is a *lot* of work. Knowing who you are, what motivates you, and where your passions lie are essential—if you want to be excited about going to work and feeling successful.

Wherever you are right now on the leadership continuum is perfect, really it is! It does not matter how much or how little you know. Some chapters may cover things that you already know and do very well, some will be timely reminders, and some may be huge “aha” moments for you. You are the best judge of where you need to spend the most time.

It is essential that you are completely honest with yourself, or the whole process will be useless and a waste of your time. Remember, no one is watching! No one will know what you think or say to yourself unless you choose to share. This is a golden opportunity to really take a close look and to discover the truth about you as a leader.

Believe it or not, you may even decide after all is said and done, that you do not want to be a leader of other people. For some, that can be a really smart decision. I've taught courses where an individual had that realization, and it may have saved his life. The extreme stress of being someone whom you do not want to be and doing something that you do not want to do can be a killer, literally!

My job is to give you the right information and the right tools for this journey. Your job is to use what you need to get where you want to go. By the time we have completed the four masteries, you will have a valuable collection of practical tools in your toolbox and a handy reference guide in case you need a refresher or want to share an exercise with your team. I hope you dog-ear and highlight everything that you want to remember, and make a right mess out of this book. Then you will know you got the most out of it.

How to Use This Book

We start with you. Then we move on to examine your interpersonal success with others, including your team. Finally, we complete the picture by exploring the culture and the system in which you work. Individual Leader → Team → System, in that order.

The most effective way to use this book is to get yourself a notebook in which to write notes to yourself, work on the dozens of exercises, and answer questions as we go through each chapter. Because each chapter builds upon the one before it, it is best to make the trip through the book in the order in which the chapters and exercises appear rather than skipping around. After your first reading, skip around all you like. Mark the pages and chapters that you would like to revisit.

If you would like to check out my online leadership resources, just go to www.AskRoxi.com. You'll find free chapters of the course, a quick leadership style assessment, and access to my monthly newsletters. I want to thank you for picking up my book. I hope you enjoy it.

Are you ready? Good—then let's get started!

Order Your Copy Today!



About the Author



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