

Outline and Reflection Paper

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Abstract

“The Book Truth About Leadership” entails ten truths that will allow readers to gain a clear and concise view of how to be an effective and successful leader. The authors emphasize the notion that leadership is about more than taking control, being in charge and wanting to gain power. Furthermore, the content of the book will elaborate on techniques as well as skills that allow those in leadership positions or those who want to pursue leadership, a better understanding of behaviors and traits that are essential to gaining results, promoting change and being your true authentic self. Polls, surveys and over 30 years of research have confirmed, challenged and created a fresh perspective on how leaders should model their relationship with followers. Hence, the relationship between follower and leader is consistently highlighted to promote a mindset that fosters reciprocal respect yet warrants results from those who willingly choose to follow.

Keywords: leadership, trustworthy, managers, truth, challenge, credibility, challenge, greatness, foundation, value

Outline of Chapter One

I. **TRUTH ONE**- YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A. Leadership is more about you than others. Knowing yourself is essential when leading in any area of your life.

II. WHATEVER YOU NEED YOU ALREADY HAVE

A. Most people believe they need more education, connections, and experience, but the authors note that what you have is enough to possess leadership qualities.

III. LEADER ROLE MODELS ARE LOCAL

A. You don't have to search for the highest position, wealthiest person or famous individuals to find leadership. The highest influence of leadership starts within the family.

IV. YOU ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT LEADER

A. Again, going back to self, when you focus on what you can achieve and ways to achieve it, successful results follow.

Summary of Chapter One

In chapter one, of the book “The Truth About Leadership” the author first acknowledges that any person who is willing to be a leader must recognize and believe in yourself. Kouzes and Posner (2010) state that before you can lead others, you should lead yourself and believe that you can have a positive impact on others (p.1). Furthermore, the authors note that leadership begins with you and everything you need you already have. When analyzing your leadership potential, you only must look inward not outward (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Often when people think of leaders, they think of celebrities, CEO’s, government officials or pastors. The surprising result of leader role models is highest for family members. Studies show that in both age groups (18-30) and (30 and over) people are highly influenced by those in their immediate family (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). According to Kouzes and Posner (2010) regardless of whether one is under or over thirty years of age when thinking back over their lives and selecting their most important leader role models, people are more likely to choose a family member than anyone else (p.9).

Another aspect that impacts my understanding of leadership is the misconception is that the president, general of office even the CEO of an organization has the most leadership influence in business. Kouzes and Posner (2010) identify that the immediate manager or supervisor has the most desire over whether employees decide to stay or leave an organization. The success of these leaders is dependent on which ones implement the five practices of exemplary leadership which are, model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act and encourage the heart. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010) the more you engage in the practices of exemplary leadership, the more likely a leader or manager will have a positive influence on others in the organization (p.12). In conclusion, my new understanding of leadership recognizes that as a leader you must first recognize the leader within

you. When doing so, remember that your role in every area of your life especially your families matters the most when influencing those around you.

Outline of Chapter Two

I. TRUTH TWO- CREDIBILITY IS THE FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP

A. If no one is following, then you are not leading. For others to follow, they must trust and believe in you, your vision and your commitment to them.

II. CONSTITUENTS HAVE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR LEADERS

A. Before anyone is going to willingly follow you or any other leader he or she wants to know that they carry specific characteristics.

III. CREDIBILITY TIES IT ALL TOGETHER

A. People want to know that they can trust their leaders to keep their word and to be passionate about their work. However, without their trust passion nor enthusiasm matters.

IV. CREDIBILITY MATTERS

A. Credibility will determine if others want to follow you or not.

V. BELIEVE IT WHEN YOU SEE IT

A. Followers are motivated by organizations that pride themselves on leaders who do what they say they are going to do. They act and not avoid empty promises.

Summary of Chapter Two

Chapter two continues with the belief system of leadership influence. Kouzes and Posner (2010) suggest that leadership works only if other people believe in you as much as you believe in yourself. The relationship between the constituents and the leader should be of free will. Meaning, it takes a certain kind of leader others are willing to follow (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). The authors also pose a relevant question which is what determining factors contribute to the voluntary support of a leader? The answer is simple, believability. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010) believability of the leader determines whether people will willingly give more of their time, talent, energy, experience, intelligence, creativity, and support (p.16). Furthermore, these authors mention that leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. When a leader is focusing on the fundamentals of this relationship they must be cognizant of all dynamics involved. Kouzes and Posner (2010) top fundamentals are leadership strategies, tactics, skills, and practices.

When analyzing leadership impact of leadership understanding for this chapter, the leader, and follower relationship requires mutual expectations. However, the leader's expectations carry more weight. Furthermore, the leader actions should demonstrate to the follower that the beliefs and values of the leader should align with their actions. Kouzes and Posner (2010) state that the consistent living out of values is a behavioral way of demonstrating honesty and trustworthiness (p.28). When respondents were polled on the top four leadership characteristics that illustrate credibility and trustworthiness, honesty, forward-thinking, inspiring, and competent exceeded all others. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010) being honest constitutes telling the truth, forward-thinking means having a sense of direction for the future, inspiring means sharing the genuine enthusiasm and excitement of possibilities and competent

refers to a leader's track record and ability to get things done (p.20). My broadened understanding of credibility confirms that these characteristics are the core of others' expectations of a leader.

Outline for Chapter Three

I. **TRUTH THREE**- VALUES DRIVE COMMITMENT

A. A leader can't fully commit to something that doesn't fit with who you are and how you see yourself.

II. LISTEN TO YOUR INNER SELF

A. Strong beliefs is the foundation for successful leaders to make an impact and allow others to know who they are and what they stand for.

III. YOU COMMIT TO WHAT FITS

A. Personal values need to be clear and relevant to your goals and visions.

IV. DISCOVER WHAT MATTERS

A. Leaders must discover their framework for living in which will drive their purpose.

V. IT'S NOT JUST YOUR VALUES

A. Building a community of followers with shared values show the wisdom of the leader.

Summary of Chapter Three

When people examine leaders based on first impressions, they want you to answer two important questions. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010), people want to know your values and your beliefs first. Furthermore, according to the authors they want to know who most influenced you, the events that shaped your attitudes, and the experiences that prepared you for the job (p.30). The objective of both the leader and the follower is to determine what is most important to you as a leader. Knowing how and why you do what you do makes the drive to commitment much easier (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Most people who look towards a leader for guidance understands that if a leader does not look within for this motivator of “knowing thyself” first, more than likely they will not know what direction to lead others. Kouzes and Posner believe that people will not follow you, pay attention to you, if you don’t have strong beliefs (p.33). Meaning, the opportunity to influence others is limited without a foundation that describes how you arrived at this position in your life.

When leaders possess the ability to identify their vision and belief systems to others, they can then move forward to committing what fits. Kouzes and Posner (2010) declare that clarity about personal values has the most significant impact on employee’s feelings about their work and what they’re doing in the workplace (p.37). Once each party is on the same page, they both can discover what matters to themselves as well as the organization. My understanding of the ideas of valuing commitment is not far from what try to implement in my leadership models and those who I look to follow. There is nothing more frustrating for an employee in my opinion who is following a leader who does not have direction due to a lack of a value system. For values to drive commitment leaders must delve into a deeper place to navigate through the trials and tribulations of corporate success and failures.

Outline for Chapter Four

I. **TRUTH FOUR**- FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE SETS LEADERS APART

A. Leaders have a dream, and they know how to take others toward that dream by strategizing and moving forward.

II. LEADERS LOOK LONG- TERM

A. Forward-thinking is a term used in this chapter to define a leader's goal to foreshadow a vision, derive a plan and execute the step.

III. YOU HAVE TO SPEND MORE TIME IN THE FUTURE

A. Meaning, those in a position to lead must always be thinking about the mindset of long-term goals.

IV. INSIGHT: EXPLORE YOUR PAST EXPERIENCES

A. When thinking about the future, sometimes it is better first to acknowledge your past.

V. OUTSIGHT: IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES

A. The most successful leaders are optimistic about their future and that of the organization.

VI. FORESIGHT: BE OPTIMISTIC

A. How can negativity or the mindset which entertains poor thoughts create an atmosphere for a change? Without optimism, a leader is bound for failure.

Summary of Chapter Four

Every organization wants to look ahead and envision their company with a bright future. Therefore, it should not be a surprise for a leader also to have an optimistic outlook. Leaders are different from contributors in one way according to Kouzes and Posner those individuals are forward thinking (2010). According to these authors, this is the single differentiating factor of those who lead and those who contribute. When building on a vision and incorporating such into the culture of the business, spending more time planning will guarantee better results for future aspirations. As I analyze the leadership qualities of myself and those I surround myself with I can decipher those who live in the now versus those who are looking ahead five or ten years. Kouzes and Posner (2010) mention that leaders think beyond what's directly in front of them, peer into the distance, imagine what's over the horizon and move forward toward a new and compelling vision (p. 46).

Reflecting on the future may be a challenge for some. However, I like how the authors note that sometimes past discoveries can help sharpen your focus on what you want and or need to create momentum. Being in leadership positions, I often reflect on how my past mistakes can be avoided. Furthermore, I analyze what worked for me in the past and how that same process can be beneficial to my future. Kouzes and Posner (2010) opined that reflecting on the past is not necessarily a helpless act. When deriving a plan to leave a legacy, leaders must be positive about their future, connected to the past and committed to the desired outcome of the future. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010), observe that to reach the top of that distant summit, you need to be optimistic, zestful and energetic (p.58). I have never seen a lethargic leader who is successful in motivating self and others. I believe this to be true for positivity breeds more positivity. Once I understood this for myself, I instantly noticed a difference in my outcomes.

Outline for Chapter Five

I. **TRUTH FIVE**- YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE

A. Because leaders need followers, it is safe to say that team building is an essential part of leadership skills.

II. YOU HAVE TO MAKE A HUMAN CONNECTION

A. Leaders must treat their followers and or employees like more than an object; they must find common ground.

III. YOU HAVE TO HEAR WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

A. Can you hear me? Is it safe to say that lack of listening skills, breeds chaos in relationships?

IV. UNITE PEOPLE AROUND A SHARED VISION

A. When a leader is promoting an organizational vision, the concept then must be shared with others.

V. MAKE OTHERS FEEL STRONG AND CAPABLE

A. Encouragement is essential to the productivity of others. Hence, when others feel they matter, they are more inclined to perform better in their roles.

VI. BRING IT OUT OF OTHERS

A. When leaders are willing to heed the advice and listen to ideas and goals of others, they become effective in team building.

Summary of Chapter Five

Halfway through this book, the focus has been on the leader. Now, authors Kouzes and Posner, focus on the how others such as teams, followers and employees have a major role in this relationship of influence. My past experiences of leadership have always prepared me for working with others because of where I began. First as an employee, then team lead, next manager and now entrepreneur. The truth about working for others is you need them to trust you regardless of what your role is in business. Kouzes and Posner (2010) acknowledge that the determining factor on whether you are a leader is if you turn around and no one is following you, then you're simply out for a walk (p.62). Because the human connection is a fact of life according to Kouzes and Posner, emotional bonds that exist between constituents and leaders are based on the effort primarily of the leader (2010). Often leaders are not considered a part of the team but a director of a team from my prior experiences. However, as Kouzes and Posner (2010) point out, leadership is a team sport (p.62).

To be productive in team environments manager, leaders and those in the role to direct others are more than inspirational speakers and motivators. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010) so often leadership is associated with inspirational speaking, but people often miss the fact that making human connections requires exceptional listening (p. 64). I have often been complimented on my listening skills. However, the downside to this skillset in my experiences has caused me to be unheard when needed. Most people interpret great listening skills to lack of communication if they are not effective communicators to begin "When you listen, when you hear, and when you truly understand the needs of your constituents, you will connect with them in ways that an out of touch leader cannot" (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p.65). I now focus on being a balanced leader who listens and expresses my need to be heard as well.

Outline for Chapter Six

I. TRUTH SIX- TRUST RULES

A. Trust simply means trust rules over all factors. Trust rules your personal credibility, your ability to get things done, to build team environments, and everything not mentioned.

II. INCREASE YOUR TRUST, INCREASE YOUR INFLUENCE

A. The more constituents trust their leaders the more willing they are to become influenced by the leader's actions.

III. YOU HAVE TO ANTE UP FIRST

A. The concept behind this statement reminds the leader to be the first to make initiatives, especially when building the foundation of trust.

IV. YOU HAVE TO SHOW THAT YOU CAN BE TRUSTED

A. Leaders must always be willing to prove to others that they can be trusted.

V. COMMUNICATE WITH A NEED TO SHARE MENTALITY

A. Most businesses fail because the employees and workers feel they cannot be trusted due to withheld information. However, if the leader does the opposite, which is share more information, the trust will form.

Summary of Chapter Six

The most important part of this chapter for me was when the authors addressed the ideas that leaders must be willing to communicate on a need to share mentality. Kouzes and Posner (2010) explain that your job as a leader is to make sure that people are getting the information they want and need, when they want and need it and in a form, they can use and understand (p.87). Unfortunately, my understanding of divulging information to those who are employees and followers was to only tell on an as needed base. When you lead from a mentality of “we” instead of “me” team building is less stressful. Moreover, people, in general, are not willing to build trust with others who are skeptical and hesitant about how much they will share of themselves. Kouzes and Posner (2010) confirm that building a structure of trust begins when one person takes a risk and opens up to another (p.79). Consequently, that person, most of the time is going to be the leader. Once, the trust increases so does the influence.

What I did not understand before reading this chapter was that trust motivates people to go beyond mere compliance with authority (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Establishing this foundation can create a dynamic for leaders in motivating others to reach for the best in themselves, their team and their organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Furthermore, these authors express four actions to keep in mind that I witnessed as a catalyst for leaders to differentiate themselves from contributors. They are behaving with consistency, communicate clearly, treat promises seriously and be forthright and candid when dealing with others (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 85). Again, as these authors reiterated throughout the first half of the book, credibility is the foundation of leadership and trustworthiness is an essential component of credibility. Therefore, it is not surprising for trust to be ranked next the process of leadership qualities to be most admired.

Outline for Chapter Seven

I. TRUTH SEVEN- CHALLENGE IS THE CRUCIBLE FOR GREATNESS

A. Leaders often learned their best leadership practices from the failures in their lives.

II. BRICK WALLS TEST COMMITMENT

A. When leaders are faced with a challenge, their reaction to the challenge determines their commitment level.

III. STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE

A. Many leaders fail to see the benefits of facing hardships to the end to see the results and experiences that allow them to grow.

IV. GET GRITTY

A. A leader's biggest motivator in a time of adversity is the behavior to the challenge and their resolve to pursue regardless.

V. FAILING IS LEARNING

A. Leaders who are the most successful are the ones who learn from their failures not run or avoid them.

Summary of Chapter Seven

The most significant truth about leadership from what I have learned thus far is that leaders who do not face adversity and or challenges throughout their journey are not as impactful to the cause or the constituents. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010), the study of leadership is the study of how men and women guide people through uncertainty, hardship, disruption, transformation, transition, recovery, new beginnings and significant challenges (p.93). Leadership has always seemed to be for me a multifaced skillset that not everyone is willing to manage or possess. Throughout the chapters, the authors notate and mention that survey after survey confirms that leadership growth is birthed out of some of the most challenging and complicated scenarios. Kouzes and Posner (2010) mentions that many people have faced life-threatening, even torturous circumstances, and have found ways to turn them into tests of strength and determination (p.94).

Thinking back at some of my most fundamental leadership experiences to my growth, were the ones that entailed risk, uncertainty and challenges. The same way I dealt with these adversities is the same way I manage life's difficulties. I agree 100% with Kouzes and Posner (2010) when they state that grit is when a leader can bounce back from mistakes and setback even stronger when they are open to failure as a learning lesson and firm in their action to stay encouraged. Grit is the measure of heart in a leader who is willing and attain their goals regardless of the obstacles that lie ahead. Inevitably when leaders carry true grit, they view their setbacks and failures as learning lesson instead of mistakes. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010) when a leader is experimenting with new ideas and trying out new methods and techniques, they have to accept failure as a part of the process (p.103). In hindsight, I struggled with this as a leader because of my need for perfection, but not anymore.

Outline for Chapter Eight

I. **TRUTH EIGHT**- EITHER LEAD BY EXAMPLE OR YOU DON'T LEAD AT ALL

A. No one wants to follow a fake or someone who will say one thing and do another, therefore, lead by example must transcend into the mindset of a leader.

II. SEEING IS BELIEVING

A. How many times has someone told you what they were going to do, yet did another? Most people won't consider you reliable until they see the fruit of your labor.

III. LEADERS GO FIRST

A. If you want to be a leader, you must first be willing to take the initiative even when it's uncomfortable.

IV. ADMIT YOUR MISTAKES

A. Leaders must be willing to admit when they are wrong or their followers will not value or trust their vision or plans in which to execute them.

According to Kouzes and Posner (2010), the biggest misconception of a leader is that they believe constituents value what they say over what they do. However, this is far from true; leaders must model what they feel, think and act to gain the respect and appreciation of those who are willing to follow. One case in chapter eight highlighted a manager who was knowledgeable enough to recognize that aspiring leaders must be able to DWYSYWD. Kouzes and Posner (2010) state that research has shown that leaders who “do what you say you will do” are tools that can carry more weight in the long run. “Leaders have only two tools at their disposal: what they say and how they act” (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 107). What I have learned from inconsistent models of leadership is that companies tend to experience high turnover and employees will not honor the companies vision nor mission if the immediate manager or leader does not represent what the organization advertises. Kouzes and Posner (2010) acknowledge that the model you provide for your peers in how you behave makes the most difference (p.110).

Along with modeling incorporates setting an example. More than likely this action moves to set an example that leaders must go first. Furthermore, they must be willing to admit their mistakes along the way. Kouzes and Posner (2010) contend that nothing undermines or erodes the credibility and your effectiveness as a role model faster than not being willing to acknowledge and take responsibility when you’ve made a mistake. (p114). Although leaders, want to be assertive, trusted, respected and valued, they should be able to receive the accolades as gracefully as they receive constructive criticism. Hence, admitting that you have made a mistake does not devalue your work, ethics, and position. “Just admit your mistakes and do what you can to correct them and move on (Kouzes & Posner, 2010).

Outline for Chapter Nine

I. **TRUTH NINE**- THE BEST LEADERS ARE THE BEST LEARNERS

A. With life experiences, formal education and other training available, leaders are never to qualified to learn new ideas and or concepts.

II. LEARNING IS THE MASTER SKILL

A. When a person stops learning, they stop leading.

III. ADOPT A GROWTH MINDSET

A. Leaders can afford to grow when they are willing to change their perspective on what a leader is or can do.

IV. DELIBERATE PRACTICE IS REQUIRED

A. Practice makes perfect.

V. SUPPORT HELPS

A. When you are on top, you must have a strong foundation. Thereby, good support is essential to leadership effectiveness.

Summary of Chapter Nine

Are leaders born or are they made? What I have learned prior to reading this book has caused me more confusion on the topic than I like to mention. However, Kouzes and Posner (2010) state that leaders are made and are teachable with the correct process. The process includes mastering the skill of learning which can be produced in a variety of ways. The next step is adapting to growth, which means learning new ways and finding new ways to learn old things (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Next, practice, practice and more practice, will separate the diligent from the slackers. Finally, utilize your support system, as stated earlier in the book, leadership is not a single act, it takes a team. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010), you can develop yourself as a leader, but it takes a continuous personal investment (p. 133). Over the years I have learned that those who never stop learning, never stop leading.

Learning tactics for leaders are through active experimentation, observation, study in the classroom, reading books, and being reflective. Most leaders that I admired the most were the ones who did not feel entitled to their role but saw their position as a privilege to help others by learning and sharing as much as they could. Kouzes and Posner (2010) opined that due to the astounding new wave of technology and the growth of change in the world, a leader who does not find ways to absorb relevant information will stunt their growth. "Individuals who have a growth mindset believe people can learn to become better leaders- that they are made and not born" (Kouzes and Posner, 2010, p.124). Also, these authors note that techniques such as coaching can facilitate leadership development. However, everything goes back to the mindset. How a leader perceives their leadership ability will alter or aid in their impact to become a better leader. Simply stated Kouzes and Posner (2010) reiterate when you believe that you can learn, then you will (p.126).

Outline for Chapter Ten

I. **TRUTH TEN**- LEADERSHIP IS AN AFFAIR OF THE HEART

A. Leaders do not detach themselves from the role or the mission they attach.

II. LOVE IS THE SOUL OF LEADERSHIP

A. The most powerful, action a person can show another human being is love, and the same is true for leaders.

III. SHOW THEM THAT YOU CARE

A. Leadership does not have to be a cold and aloof form of working with people to achieve goals; leaders can build relationships that outlast organizational goals.

IV. FALL IN LOVE WITH WHAT YOU DO

A. You must love what you do or do what you love, but the premise is the same as loving what you do is important.

V. PROMOTE THE POSITIVE

A. Being optimistic is not only significant to the mindset of a forward-thinking leader but being positive also must be shared with others.

Summary of Chapter Ten

“There’s no integrity and honor without heart” (Kouzes and Posner, 2010, p.136). What a powerful statement and one that is fitting for a message at the end of a book about leadership. When speaking to managers and leaders in corporate settings, there are not many talks about love and being caring for others. Kouzes and Posner (2010) express that exemplary leaders excel at improving performance because they pay great attention to the human heart (p.136). However, I believe that with anything love needs to exist to achieve any type of positive and long-lasting outcome. The authors further note that love allows followers to feel connected, cared for and committed to leadership model of the individual who pays attention to how they feel. Plus, there is a deeper connection with others feel that they matter. Now how does this happen? By leaders giving the attention to others instead of seeking the attention for themselves (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). People are attached to feelings, whether positive or negative and leaders carry the ability to recognize constituents by showing and not only saying. “Recognition does not need to come in the form of elaborate event or expensive awards. In fact, the more personal they are, the more impact they can have” (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p.142).

Therefore, it only makes sense to show love if you are in love with what you do. Authors Kouzes and Posner (2010) suggest that best leadership practices derive from when individuals fall in love with their work, and the reason for why they do it (p.145). In earlier chapters, the authors mention how knowing yourself and what you believe builds credibility. However, when those foundations are established, the leader's purpose becomes a passion which I know from personal experience can exude a love for what you do. According to Kouzes and Posner (2010), exemplary leaders are upbeat, positive, and generate the emotional energy that enables others to flourish (p. 152).

References

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