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## Book Review: Grit, Grace, and Gratitude

Elizabeth Gingerich

Valparaiso University, [elizabeth.gingerich@valpo.edu](mailto:elizabeth.gingerich@valpo.edu)

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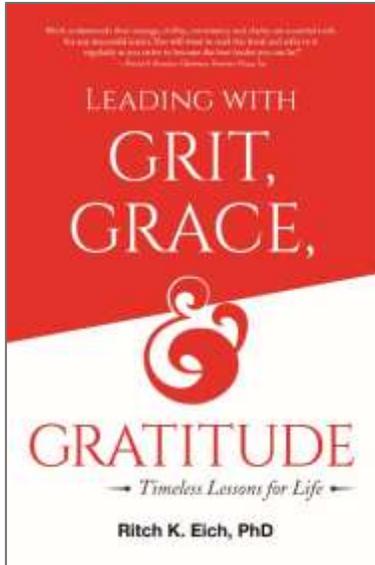
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## **Leading with Grit, Grace, and Gratitude: Timeless Lessons for Life**

Author: Ritch K. Eich  
Release Date: July 7, 2020  
Publisher: RKE Books  
Pages: 85  
ISBN: 978-0-758-69828-1  
Reviewer: Elizabeth Gingerich

Ritch K. Eich, a lifetime learner with decades of service and experience in the corporate, armed services, academic, and family-based worlds, has launched a leadership manual and memoir that warrants widespread attention and implementation in the workplace...and in life. It is not surprising that this book is dedicated to healthcare workers, who have exhibited tenacity and adherence to purpose in fighting the ravages of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Not only is the author's dedication fitting of his character, but a prime example of the three characteristics pursued in this book: *Grit*, *Grace*, and *Gratitude*. Eich taps into a lifetime of experiences, not for self-congratulation, but to identify what has worked as well as what needs to be avoided within these three interrelated discussions. His use of examples – both past and present – helps animate these selected traits.

### **GRIT**

Eich defines *grit* as “the passionate pursuit of hard goals that awes and inspires you and others to become better people, flourish emotionally, take positive risks and live your best lives.” This definition incorporates the traits of courage and strength, necessary to persevere one's goals and to fortify character while concomitantly remaining conscientious of others' needs. Adversity and nonacceptance do not deter the gritty leader who continuously displays endurance and resilience, highlights the positive, and continues to move forward despite the odds.

In his discussion, Eich emphasizes that grit includes the courage of a person to change organizations through “bold, innovative, and sometimes controversial major change initiatives.” This leader should not be blind, however, in this pursuit but rather should seek to identify realistic avenues to pursue his or her objectives. The inspired leader must embed the chosen initiative while engaging the entirety of the organization to join in the effort: “Leaders must get ahead of these monumental challenges [world poverty, terrorism, climate change] with values-based leadership that moves us to a far better, sustainable future.” The author uses such examples as Oakland A's manager Billy Beane – who radically changed how the game of baseball was played through data-driven results.

Further, the gritty leader endeavors to risk using untraditional methods of change and development, making aspirational leadership into a reality grounded in foundational values. The key attributes of a gritty leader should include empathy – a true understanding of and

cares for those following – and the necessary patience to be prepared for a long venture marked with mistakes made, noted, and corrected. The gritty leader does not perfunctorily challenge accepted mores and traditions, but is bold and ready to institute new ways. This leader must be ready to compromise – civilly, and not begrudgingly – and be prepared to take responsibility, being accountable for any setbacks experienced along the way.

Grit as defined by Eich refers to the determination made possible through personal growth, talent development, and leadership achievement. It accentuates a willingness to stay the course and is an indispensable element of entrepreneurship. Grit relates to the intuitive leanings of guts over talent – a display of often incalculable passion and the perseverance for fulfilling long-term goals in both life and business. Eich acknowledges that the gritty leader seeks to achieve goals even amidst discouragement. This pathway is not just a question of survivability, but a journey of determination powered by an innate sense of the drive to succeed. And that “stick-to-it-ness” often is the propulsion of both morality and genuine and sustaining happiness. Grit is what ultimately makes a life purposeful and fruitful. It is humility with enduring focus, ever receptive to criticism and other points of view. This tenacity to attain certain objectives should not, however, occur as a result of sacrificing or hurting others.

Several additional examples used to display this trait include Cokie Roberts and Sally Ride in the advancement of women in journalism and space exploration, respectively, as well as the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, who – in the Spring of 2018 – experienced the tragic and violent loss of peers and mentors yet stood tall to engage in the gun debate, banding together to put pressure on the Florida legislature to make policy changes. Cesar Chávez is also highlighted as a determined leader who fought tirelessly to expose and remediate harsh working conditions of migrant farm workers.

The gritty leader also champions greater diversity in the process of decision-making: diversity of gender, race, and economic status – as such reflects society at large and hence functions as an integral way to elicit policy change, develop new products, and process needed feedback. Many of the author’s examples show remarkable individuals who forecasted the future and did the right without waiting for acceptance – like Brooklyn Dodgers’ general manager Branch Rickey and player Jackie Robinson – both risking the immediate environment of racial division, choosing the right and moral path. Chosen paths of courage ultimately prove alignment with developing community values, and, as a bonus, often generate long-term financial benefits.

Eich focuses on the importance of inclusivity as the moral and necessary tool to garner a larger swarth of talent, skill sets, and world experiences. Grit exemplified in this way enhances a company’s image and reputation and solidifies customer loyalty, tapping into purchasing power and stimulating creativity for even newer ventures. [The interviewer would also cite another example of a humble, talented, and tenacious leader, standing his ground for what he believes – quarterback Colin Kaepernick – a trait noticed by Nike in its campaign to “Believe in Something”].

## **GRACE**

Borrowing from life and work experiences – Eich maintains that *grace* is a combination of many values, including the cherishing of others, being mutually respectful, treating others with dignity, showing gratitude, being encouraging and helpful, and displaying quiet self-confidence without arrogance. Grace lifts the spirits of colleagues, teammates, and co-

workers, and delivers an invaluable source of positive energy that lifts spirits. The leader imbued with grace is competent, always remaining composed and ready to quietly help others to succeed with an enthusiastic, positive disposition.

Grace, as defined by the author can further be described as being accessible, ready to roll up one's sleeves and join in the task at hand. The graceful leader eschews greed and polarizing politics, and rather leads with an astute decorum in his or her treatment of others. Summarily, "No leader wants to fail but not enough yet realize the indisputable linkage between treating everyone with genuine respect and recognition of their worth and the organization's sustained competitive advantage – the difference between positive and inclusive versus negative and alienating." Further, as the author explains, for true success in business, those in control must teach skill competency and improvement but, in the process, be receptive to feedback, leaving room for a certain degree of vulnerability which is necessary for relationship-building.

Grace in leadership must involve learning which transcends complacency with current knowledge and opens the mind to new concepts, ways of thinking, and alternate processes. Grace helps to move past the status quo and narrowmindedness that often accompanies mental stagnation. Graceful leadership cannot be personalized, but rather must be recognized as the outcome of communal dialogue and knowledge application. Grace allows for the expression of one's values but ascribes value to others wherever possible. It celebrates past successes but does not dwell on isolated accomplishments.

Eich remarks that life and work are sustained on the creation and maintenance of relationships – personal connections which must be developed and sustained through honesty, open communication, mutual trust, and genuine care, with no hidden agenda. For this indeed is grace in action. He cites leadership examples who exemplify this trait, e.g., Jacinda Ardern of NZ (direct and honest, listening to constituents and gaining their trust) and former Senator John McCain from Arizona who criticized his party and president on many issues, risking party shunning and transcending power and position.

Finally, grace rejects rudeness -especially as it has been amplified by divisive politics, inaction, wrong action, and COVID confinement. It embraces patience, purpose, and tolerance. He uses Anthony Fauci, M.D., Director of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at NIH, as a leader who champions these characteristics without concern of negative political consequences, guiding us all during a pandemic.

## **GRATITUDE**

Eich accentuates the maxim that when leaders show appreciation and value those under their influence, the workforce tends to work hard to live up to leader expectations. When workers feel that their work is appreciated and their ideas actually listened to, there is a renewed dedication to do their very best. And "thank you" does not need to wait until a significant accomplishment is achieved – acknowledging the little victories goes far and should be implemented whenever possible.

One genuine way of showing gratitude is through using the personal, handwritten note; it shows thoughtfulness, time, effort, and investment ... something social media just cannot convey. Howard Schultz of Starbucks is used as an example of a grateful leader who praised the efforts of his workers and colleagues. Another way of conveying gratitude to one's constituents is by taking measures to improve the immediate environs. Playing live or streaming in

recorded music, exhibiting artwork, and installing gardens or simply bringing in plants can effectively accomplish this objective. [There are several examples that come to mind: Rush Hospital in Chicago, Illinois has done just that with the construction of a garden area within its premises and the corridor display of children's artwork; O'Hare has used part of its Terminal 3 to vertically grow herb and vegetable crops which are used in airport restaurants; and the cities of both Chicago and Portland (Oregon) have capitalized on using rooftop gardens to both help insulate many commercial and government buildings while improving the aesthetics of the workplace.]

Through sincere gratitude, an effective vision can be created and communicated pervasively to generate acceptance by and invigorate workers, friends, and followers. Communication is key and appreciation of efforts essential.

## **CONCLUSION**

Core values undergird a successful enterprise. These values then identify purpose which advance to vision. Vision should be driven deep into the organization's workforce. The true leader seeks continual input as the vision materializes and must personally model this vision for others to show seriousness of commitment. The values-based leader must clearly articulate values at every opportunity and remain aware of one's own thoughts and principles and be willing to alter them as exposure reveals new and better ways.

Eich has defined the gritty, graceful, and appreciative leader as one who understands that leadership does not occur within a vacuum but is founded on myriad interrelationships. This leader fosters ethical practices and a just environment "of which community-model thinking and authentic leadership are essential components." For the best companies are the ones that transcend profits and embrace purpose. They have carved out a clear company brand and a solid, respectful identity, one that "actually lives and breathes through its people, inside and outside of the company."