

The Journal of Values-Based Leadership

Manuscript 1427

Book Review: How to Lead

Eya Mahouachi

Jyoti Aggarwal

Nidhi Aggarwal

Nana Manu

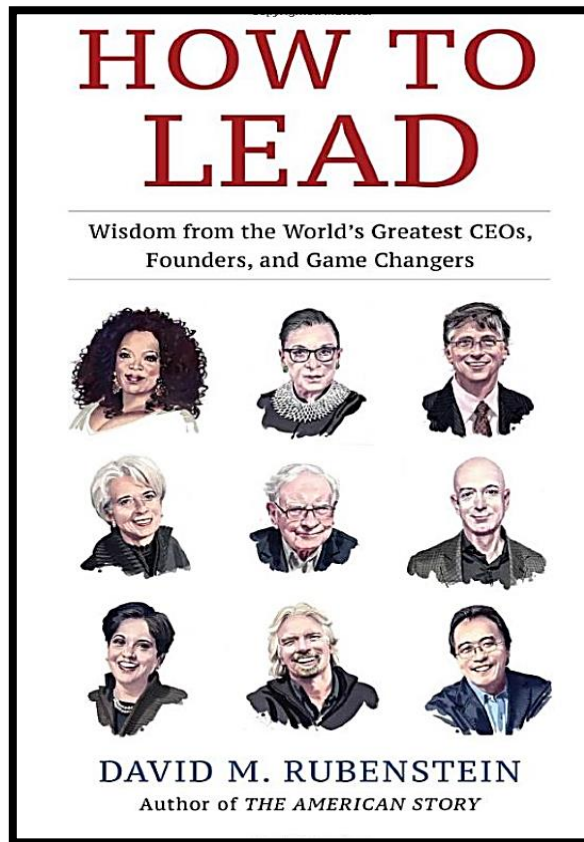
Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl>



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Business at ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Values-Based Leadership by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at scholar@valpo.edu.

BOOK REVIEW



Title: How to Lead

Author: David M. Rubenstein

Reviewers: Eya Mahouachi,
Jyoti Aggarwal, Nidhi
Aggarwal, Nana Manu

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Pages: 448

Publication Date: 2020

ISBN-10:1982132159

Abstract

Many consider leadership a path to improve their personal, social, and professional lives. People believe that leaders add unique skills to their lives and improve the world in the long run. Accordingly, authors have provided leadership books to help individuals understand leadership and leaders. The author of this book, David M. Rubenstein is one such writer. This book offers perspectives on different leadership experiences. These are categorized into visionaries, builders, transformers, commanders, decision-makers, and masters. The vision of this book is to inspire readers to develop and enhance their leadership skills. Altogether, this book proves that there is no perfect way to lead; any person from any background can become a leader who can make positive changes.

Introduction

Amongst the many definitions of leadership, one provides that it is a pathway that guides an individual to develop unique potential. As a leader, it is expected that the personal, social, and professional aspects of the individual will grow. As good leadership becomes a growing demand, authors have provided books that help individuals understand what it means to be a leader. The author of the reviewed book, *How to Lead*, is David Rubenstein, host of *The David Rubenstein Show: Peer-to-Peer Conversations* on Bloomberg TV (Rubenstein, 2022). In

the book, *How to Lead*, the author presents narrations with a set of interviews with renowned leaders across the United States.

The primary purpose of the book is to provide a range of perspectives from different kinds of leaders, with the hope of inspiring readers to develop and enhance leadership skills. In doing so, the author analyzes the leadership traits of each leader through individual interviews. He poses interesting questions such as finding out what key factors led them to lead, and if they believe in luck, drive talent, training, experience, or other aspects of managing people. The author also inquired how their ability to lead was found and cultivated, how they put their work into action, and what happened when it was tested.

The material provided in the book is primarily for anyone who is curious about knowing the world's most outstanding leaders. Additionally, it is a side activity book for an undergraduate or graduate course in fields such as business, leadership, philosophy, sociology, educational administration, public administration, and healthcare administration. While the title of this book prompts readers to think about how to lead, the author addresses the personal journey of each leader interviewed. The book does not provide the perfect leadership style or the perfect leader, but it presents the experiences of different leaders.

Overview

Based on the author's experience and narration, the book is categorized into leadership styles and experiences derived from the circumstances and characteristics of the interviewees. These six categories include visionaries, builders, transformers, commanders, decision-makers, and masters. Some interviews of the best-known leaders showed how leadership was cultivated throughout their respective careers. His idea of interviewing leaders provided many perspectives. As a result, readers will be inspired to enhance their leadership styles and skills.

The Visionaries

The first category is comprised of the visionaries; leaders correspond to individuals with a clear vision of what they want and how to do it. These individuals started small, envisioned minute things evolving into significant undertakings, and had an intuition for decision-making. Interviewees shared a similar goal of having a vision for their idea to succeed. Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, and Richard Branson had the same answer when asked how they became successful. They answered that they all started with a small idea and their hard work and persistence made them successful. Bill Gates, for example, also saw an urgency in creating software from a relatively inconspicuous idea which later became one of the largest enterprises in the world. Another visionary trait of intuition for decision-making was demonstrated in Bill Gates as he narrated how he dropped out of Harvard to write computer code. Overall, visionaries did not aim to be leaders, instead, they concentrated on doing something unique.

The Transformers

Another category consisted of the transformers who were individuals possessing such qualities as distinct leadership skills backed by a complementary support system. The transformers believed that a sound leader have a clear vision and try every possibility to make it happen. In the interviews, the author found acclaimed female role models, such as Melinda Gates, Ginni Rometty, and Indira Nooyi, all of whom were known for their passionate commitment to lead large organizations (Rubenstein, 2020). The author noticed similarities

among transformers in that they were believers in philanthropy. Melinda Gates, for example, narrated how she led the organization of the Giving Pledge and how her interest in computers led her to Microsoft and eventually to philanthropic leadership.

The Builders

The builders believed in developing their leadership skills for personal growth. A shared skill was their ability to evaluate people, find more meaning in their position, make quick judgments, and remain persistent. The author described builders as people who excelled in nurturing their personal and professional lives. Builders also believed in the philanthropic acts of creating opportunities for others. An example of a builder mentioned in the book is Robert Smith, the wealthiest African American man in the world, who attributed his success to creating equal opportunities for all young African Americans. Another example of a builder was Ken Griffin; he believed in timing, learning to trust people, trusting their judgment, and delegating work to skilled people within any job setting. Interestingly, Marilyn Hewson was the only female listed as a builder. The author highlighted her ability to negotiate with presidents and become a strong woman amidst her role as a wife and mother. In her interview, she attributed her success to her husband's support and her persistence in funding herself through college.

The Commanders

The commanders held strategic governmental positions as leaders in the United States. The author mentions two former presidents, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, one female; Condolezza Rice, and three leaders who also served in the United States Government. Overall, the commanders were very open about their humble beginnings: what mattered the most to them aside from authority, and the impact of their work on other parts of government, and their lives. In the interview, Former President Clinton narrated his life journey from a less privileged family, fighting all odds and making it to the White House. When asked a question about the most rewarding part of the presidency, Former President Bush stated that it was his ability to sustain his relationship with his daughters, while Former President Clinton stated his cherished ability has brought shared prosperity among all Americans. The only female commander, Condolezza Rice, spoke about her love for policy, not politics. Within the context of policy, she spoke about some political wins and what leadership should be. She mentioned Nelson Mandela as a prime leader who had vision and humility as compared to other leaders who were compromised due to arrogance and hubris. Another commander, David Petraeus, believed in strategic leadership. His narration was intriguing because he presented four critical parts needed for all leaders: acquiring ground-breaking ideas, communicating effectively, overseeing the implementation of the ideas, and engaging in the process to determine how the nascent ideas needed to be revised and refined in response to the circumstances at hand.

The Decision-Makers

The decision-makers were brave and conscious of the impact of their choices because they influenced people. Nancy Pelosi, the first US Speaker of the House of Representatives, stated in her interview with the author; "have no fear," "model to women," and "know your why." She believed leadership was "not about managing people, but rather about managing time." Another example was Anthony Fauci, the Director of the National Institute of Health who became popular because of his leadership in healthcare during COVID-19. His view on good leadership was described as hiring the right skilled people and having a clear vision. Former

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Director Christine Lagarde also listed the traits of confidence, hard work, and intellect as the primary drivers of her leadership success. Like Pelosi, Lagarde spoke about the discrimination she faced as a woman in leadership. Ruth Ginsburg, the former US Supreme Court Judge, also experienced discrimination which was funneled to her advocacy for women’s rights and silencing of irrelevant opinions. Judge Ginsburg mentioned a piece of marriage advice given by her mother-in-law which she believed was vital for a successful life journey as a leader and decision-maker: “Now and then, it helps to be a little deaf.” Her fight for the equal rights amendment and against gender discrimination made her an icon. Overall, the author had more women categorized as decision-makers, presumably because of their influence.

The Masters

The last category is the masters. Being identified as a master includes a high degree of self-confidence and makes it clear that leaders must believe in what they are trying to accomplish, understanding that it is a never-ending quest for an unachievable goal. One of the masters is Jack Nicklaus, widely known during his career as the record’s greatest golfer. His talent to win so frequently, in the most vital competitions specifically, and to do so with modesty, made him a model of athletic leadership. Nicklaus mentioned that nobody had ever mastered golf. However, he also stated that he enjoyed it because no matter how proficient he became, he could continuously improve.

In addition, former tennis champion Renée Fleming mentioned that making it to the top was not tricky but staying at the top was incredibly difficult. It required ongoing learning. In the same context, Yo-Yo Ma – the world’s most visible and acclaimed classical musician – stated that leadership was about continuous learning and finding the best way to summarize the communication of an idea as accurately as possible. *Table 1* summarizes all these leadership experiences.

Table 1: A Summary of Six Leadership Experiences Categories by David Rubenstein (2020)

Leadership Experience Categories	Leadership Experience	Sample Quotes	Leaders
The Visionaries	These leaders possess a clear vision.	“All my best decisions in business and life have been made with heart, intuition, guts, not analysis” (Rubenstein, 2020, p. 6). Jeff Bezos	Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Richard Branson, Oprah Winfrey, Warren Buffett
The Transformers	These leaders have good leadership skills and curiosity	“If you don’t have a natural curiosity, then you need to develop one” (Rubenstein, 2020, p. 182). Ginni Rometty	Melinda Gates, Eric Schmidt, Tim Cook, Ginni Rometty, Indra Nooyi
The Builders	These leaders believe in developing their skills to see growth.	“Hollywood will portray a leader as tall and handsome and strong-jawed; the outstanding leaders are just the opposite. First of all, they've got to want it. But they come in all shapes and sizes" (Rubenstein, 2020, p. 110). Phil Knight	Phil Knight, Ken Griffin, Robert F. Smith, Jamie Dimon, Marilyn Hewson
The Commanders	These leaders have big ideas, communicate	"I have always followed the 'Prior preparation prevents poor performance' mantra. I think those things made a	George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, Colin Powell,

	effectively, and oversee the implementation of their ideas.	difference. I was raised to believe that if you start something, you finish it, or you do everything you can to finish it" (Rubenstein, 2020, p. 264). James A Baker III	David Petraeus, Condoleezza Rice, James A. Baker III
The Decision-makers	They are brave and conscious of the impact of the choices they make.	"You don't dictate to people. But if you let them know what your vision is, hire the best people, and then don't get in their way, those are the qualities of a good leader" (Rubenstein, 2020, p. 309). Dr. Anthony S. Fauci	Nancy Pelosi, Adam Silver, Christine Lagarde, Anthony S. Fauci, Ruth Bader Ginsburg
The Masters	They have high self-confidence and believe in a never-ending quest for an unachievable goal.	"I don't have a wish list. What I do have is an open mind and a belief in the future. I believe that things come to us if we work hard, we're dedicated, we love what we're doing, and we're passionate" (Rubenstein, 2020, p. 371). Renee Fleming	Jack Nicklaus, Mike "Coach K" Krzyzewski, Renée Fleming, Yo-Yo Ma, Lorne Michaels

Contribution to the Field

The book provides a new contribution to leadership since the author interviewed well-known leaders. The author's curiosity to know why someone should become a leader and how to remain an extraordinary leader exhibited unique qualities such as ambition, talent, and ability. The 31 leaders described their leadership experiences, behaviors, attributes, skills, and other qualities like decision-making, teamwork, the effectiveness of proactive strategies, and innovation. For example, Nicklaus described that knowing one's capabilities and believing in oneself was crucial in making such an individual's dreams come true.

The manner in which leadership styles are provided in the interviews would encourage individuals to learn more about leadership. Relevant leaders' experiences have been presented in the book. The book is a unique contribution to leadership because, in addition to interviewing famous leaders, the author attempted to illustrate the concepts easily so that anyone without a leadership background could learn from them. This attempt is hard to find in other leadership books as they only focus on academic theories. Someone will choose this book over another because the author provides an opportunity for the readers to analyze how to lead and identify concrete examples of effective behaviors with the help of famous leaders. Readers will enjoy learning the concepts with this new way of learning and practicing leadership.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The author presented interesting perspectives in his book, "How to Lead," all of which were attributed to the tone and narration of his interviews with the leaders. Beginning with the strengths, Rubenstein strategically categorized unique leadership styles based on experiences, function, and personality. Most discussions in the book touched on people of influence, their family, and their journey. Rubenstein unraveled leadership skills, thought processes, and decision-making patterns through the interviews. The diversity of leaders also added to the strength of the book because the reader understood that all leaders lead, but they all had different stories. Rubenstein's interview questions were designed to obtain inspirational stories that positively impacted the leaders. The questions also unraveled how the leaders cultivated their unique experiences, fulfillment, and happiness.

A limitation of the book is seen in the similarity of the author's questions; most of which presented a narrow predictive viewpoint leading to boundaries on the perspective of the

leaders. Suggestively, the author could have categorized the questions to include modern leadership theories that support the leadership styles and categories of each leader. With references to behavioral or personality theories to affirm his reasoning for categorization. Also, the lack of research references made the book less recommendable for academia. Another limitation is that the author did not include the dates or times of the interviews which may present a barrier to how the reader perceives the perspective of leadership. For example, leaders interviewed within a span of 5 years could have various interpretations of a particular occurrence such as a global pandemic or an economic recession. Providing a time frame for the interviews will help the reader's reason along with the thought process of the interviewees.

The book accomplished its purpose of praising notable leaders who have stood out to impact most, if not all, of the 21st century. Based on the narrations, the book portrays that there is no perfect leadership style which leaves room for anyone to become a leader as long as they can create a positive change. Overall, the author's compilation of interviews with 31 world-renowned leaders from a diverse pool of industries, personalities, and leadership skills contributed to the richness of the book.

Conclusion

Leaders have different visions, and the book, *How to Lead*, contributes to the collection of visions by showcasing the great experiences of leaders and how leaders create a successful journey of lifelong self-growth. The leaders interviewed in the book faced unprecedented challenges yet maintained confidence in their leadership practice and expertise, all of which guided the leaders towards beneficial solutions. The positive attitude of the leaders mentioned in the book reflects their vision and decisive leadership. Additionally, the book's narration can pivot a considerable thought for existing and future leaders on "*How to lead*" and how to transform an organization by creating new pathways for success. The book integrated a piece of high-quality information by interviewing leaders of different styles. The book also elucidated an excellent source of encouragement and wisdom from the world's greatest CEOs, founders, and game changers which could help students to build choices. The creativity, success, passion, concentration, commitment, philanthropy, diversity, and establishment in the leadership of the interviewees was profound, all of which set a stage for the audience on how the reader can become a great leader.

References

- Rubenstein, D. M. (2022). *David M. Rubenstein: Biography*. Retrieved February 15, 2022, from <https://www.davidrubenstein.com/biography.html>
- Rubenstein, D. M. (2020). *How to Lead: Wisdom from the World's Greatest CEOs, Founders, and Game Changers* (Illustrated ed.). Simon & Schuster.

About the Reviewers

Eya Mahouachi, MBA, BS, ABD EdD

Eya Mahouachi received an MBA in Management Information Systems in 2018 from University of Mary Washington, Washington, D.C. She is an ABD in the Educational Leadership

program at University of Lynchburg, Virginia, and very curious, competitive, and always interested to learn about new subjects.

Ms. Mahouachi can be reached at mahouae875@lynchburg.edu

Jyoti Aggarwal

Jyoti Aggarwal is a PhD candidate in the Public Administration program at the University of Texas, Dallas. Her research draws on Yukl's leadership behaviors to understand how these behaviors relate with bettering employee's working experience in the federal government. Her dissertation entitled: *Examining the Relationship between Leadership Behaviors and Employee Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention, and Perceptions of Leadership Performance in the Federal Government during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, is the first study to examine leadership performance of federal leaders that eventually impacts federal employees' overall satisfaction. She received The Kenneth R. Garren Outstanding Leadership Studies Student award on May 21, 2022 from the University of Lynchburg following receipt in 2021 of the Individual Leadership Award. Jyoti holds a Master's Degree in Science Education from the University of Lynchburg where she currently works as a Graduate Assistant for Graduate Studies. She served as a vice-president for the University of Lynchburg, Omicron Delta Kappa – the National Leadership Honor Society – during 2020-21. Jyoti's research is scheduled for publication in 2022 in the *Journal of Leadership Studies and Public Administration Review*.

Ms. Aggarwal can be reached at Jxa210047@utdallas.edu.

Dr. Nidhi Aggarwal

Nidhi Aggarwal is an Assistant Professor at the University of Lynchburg, Virginia, and has co-authored the following: "Antecedents of Job Satisfaction in Healthcare Environment" (with Welsh, J., Aggarwal, N. and Thompson, E.) *Journal of Business and Economic Perspectives*, Vol.47, No.2, pp. 1-17 (2019); California's Drought and Almond Breeze (with Joe, J. and Gupta, A.) *Case Studies in Business and Management*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-14 (2019); "Issues in small private universities: An empirical analysis" (with Gupta, A.) *American Society of Business & Behavioral Sciences Conference*, 2020, New Delhi, India (2020); "California's Drought and Almond Breeze" (with Joe, J. and Gupta, A.) *3rd International Conference on New Frontiers of Engineering, Management, Social Science and Humanities*, India (2019); "Role of small private universities in developing quality workforce through quality education: Leadership challenges and strategies" (with Gupta, A. and Johnson, B.) *Cambridge Business & Economics Conference*, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK. (2019); "Vodafone India: The Indian Wireless Industry in 2016" (with Aggarwal, N.) *Cambridge Business & Economics Conference*, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK (2018).

Dr. Nidhi Aggarwal can be reached at naggarwal@vul.edu.

Nana Manu, MBA

Nana Manu received her MBA in Project Management in 2017 from Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia. She is a doctoral candidate in the EdD in Leadership Studies program at the University of Lynchburg, Virginia. She has over five years of experience in applying strategic approaches to technical and non-technical project management and business development. She has a record of mitigating project risk and building strong customer relationships with an international perspective and extensive experience in cross-cultural communication. She is an active learner who is always exploring new ideas.

Ms. Manu can be reached at manu_n@alum.lynchburg.edu.