LEARNING LEADERSHIP

The 5 Fundamentals of Becoming an Exemplary Leader

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LEARNING LEADERSHIP

THE FIVE FUNDAMENTALS OF BECOMING AN EXEMPLARY LEADER

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There’s a leadership shortage in the world. It’s not a shortage of potential talent. The people are out there. The eagerness is out there. The resources are out there. The capability is out there.

The shortage is a result of three primary factors: demographic shifts, insufficient training and experiences, and the prevailing mindsets that discourage people from learning to lead.

Currently 25 percent of the global workforce comprises millennials (those born between 1981 and 1997), and in some countries that number approaches 50 percent. By 2025 estimates are that millennials will comprise 75 percent of the global workforce. At the same time as their numbers in the workplace are growing daily, organizations around the world do not feel that they have an ample leadership pipeline to meet present and future needs. An alarming 86 percent of respondents to the latest World Economic Forum survey think there is a leadership crisis in the world today, and most companies are seriously worried about their leadership bench strength. The
demographic shifts are simply creating demand for exemplary leadership that exceeds supply.5

If the need for leadership development is great, then why is the pipeline nearly empty? Part of the answer comes from research leadership scholar Jack Zenger conducted. He looked at his worldwide database of people participating in leadership training and found that their average age was 42. However, the average age of supervisors in the database was 33. “It follows then,” Jack reports, “that if they’re not entering leadership training programs until they’re 42, they are getting no leadership training at all as supervisors. And they’re operating with the company untrained, on average, for over a decade.”6 Wow!

Let us ask you something: Would you seek medical treatment from an untrained physician? Would you allow an untrained accountant to audit your company’s books? Or, would you hire an untrained engineer to design a new self-driving car? Of course you wouldn’t. So, why is this permitted inside organizations?

Add another sobering fact to this shortage of leadership, and inadequate preparation. There has been a global decline in the level of trust that people have in their leaders. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer—a highly respected annual study of trust in major institutions and their leaders—"the number of countries with trusted institutions has fallen to an all-time low among the informed public. Among the general population, the trust deficit is even more pronounced, with nearly two-thirds of countries falling into the distruster category."7 Around the world people trust their leaders less and less—no wonder there is a leadership crisis.

For all the talk about the importance of leadership development and the need for better leaders, organizations, including governments and schools, have been putting little of their money where their mouths are. They haven’t been doing what
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they say is vitally important. This is a somber global concern. At the same time it is a huge opportunity for those organizations and individuals who choose to take the initiative.

This is the major reason why we wrote this book. We’ve been researching and writing about leadership for three and a half decades, and we’ve been developing leaders for even longer. But we’re seeing a growing divide between demand and supply that needs to be filled—and filled rapidly. We want to continue contributing not only to narrowing that chasm but also to supporting the initiative to create more and better leaders for the world.

THE LEADERSHIP MINDSET

In seminars we’ve been asking participants this question: “How many of you think of yourself as a leader?” In a group of 50 people, typically only six raise their hands. Even though these are usually people who have come together for leadership development, only about 10 percent identify themselves as leaders. Perhaps people are being modest, and they think that if they say they’re leaders, they’ll appear arrogant and as braggadocios. Maybe. But we think there’s more to it than that. A mythology about leadership persists that makes people reluctant to claim leadership for themselves. It’s as if leadership starts with a capital L and is reserved only for those with some special talent, birthright, gene, calling, position, or title. This perspective creates an invisible barrier and is a limiting belief that stops many from answering the call.

Debi Coleman is one of the first leaders we ever interviewed about personal-best leadership practices and the first leader we quoted in the very first edition of our book *The Leadership Challenge*. At that time Debi was vice president of worldwide manufacturing for Apple Computers. In our interview she
explained, “I think good people deserve good leadership. The people I manage deserve the best leadership in the world.” Debi is now managing partner of SmartForest Ventures, a venture capital firm, and serves on numerous boards. When we caught up with her again, we learned that her perspective on leadership is the same today as when we first talked with her more than 30 years ago.

Debi expresses the spirit of all exemplary leaders. They strive mightily to deliver the best leadership in the world because they firmly believe that people deserve it. Most likely that’s exactly what you want from your leaders. If you believe that the people you now lead, or will lead in the future, deserve the best leadership in the world, and if it’s clear that there’s a growing need for an increased quantity and quality of leaders, then it is imperative that you become the best leader you can be. Step one is to develop a leadership mindset. You don’t have to wait for an organization to offer a program for you to become the best. Nor do you have to wait for someone else to give you permission or provide some special resource. Just as Dorothy and her colleagues in The Wizard of Oz discovered, you already have everything you need to become an exemplary leader.

This is the other reason why we wrote this book. We want to address and rectify some prevailing myths and misconceptions about what it takes to learn to become an exemplary leader.

**LEARNING TO BECOME AN EXEMPLARY LEADER**

After more than 30 years of research, we know that you are fully capable of leading. You may not realize it or fully believe it, but it’s true. It’s also true for 99.999 percent of people in the world. (That’s a statistic we’ll explain in one of the early chapters.) The larger purpose of this book is to share with you
what we’ve learned about how you can create the conditions, inside yourself and in the context in which you live and work, to become a much better leader than you are today.

We show that you can learn to be a better leader than you are today if you believe in yourself, aspire to be great, challenge yourself to grow, engage the support of others, and practice deliberately. In each of the chapters of this book, we share a key message about developing exemplary leadership, and we offer a practical tip on how to increase your capacity to lead.

*Learning Leadership* is divided into seven parts. Part I is on the fundamentals. It sets the tone for the book and provides the context for discussing what people need to do to become better leaders. We talk about the myths and assumptions that inhibit leadership development, the five fundamentals of becoming an exemplary leader, the evidence that leadership matters, and how you are already leading but not frequently enough.

In Part II of *Learning Leadership*, we discuss the essential elements of the first fundamental: Believe you can. We stress how important it is to have a strong belief in your capabilities and a mindset that leadership can be learned. We present evidence that learning is the master skill and that leadership emerges from within.

Part III is about the second fundamental: Aspire to excel. This part of the book talks about the importance of knowing who you are and knowing what is important to you. You can’t lead others if you don’t know yourself. You also have to be concerned about the future. Who you are today is not who you will be in the future, and the same is true for your constituents. We also point out that leadership is a relationship and not simply about the leader’s personal aspirations. Leadership requires you to know and appreciate your constituents.

Part IV addresses the third fundamental of becoming an exemplary leader: Challenge yourself. This part of the book
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discusses how challenge is critical to learning. You need to take initiative in your own development. We point out that there will be inevitable setbacks and failures along the way that require grit, courage, and resilience to persist in learning and becoming the best you can be.

Part V is about the fourth fundamental: Engage support. Here we point out that everyone who achieves excellence gets support and coaching along the way. Whether it’s family, managers at work, or professional coaches, leaders need the advice and counsel and the care and support of others. To learn leadership, you need to get connected to a network of resources. You also need feedback to know what progress you are making, how you are growing, and what you still need to be working on.

The fifth fundamental, practice deliberately, is the focus of Part VI. In this part we talk about the fact that to become great at leadership, you have to spend time practicing the skills. Just being in the role of a leader is insufficient. You have to set goals, participate in designed learning experiences, ask for feedback, and get coaching. You also have to put in the time every day and make learning leadership a daily habit.

Part VII of Learning Leadership is on the will and the way. We conclude the book with a chapter that summarizes the key messages and offers commentary on how it’s essential to follow through on your commitments to learn. The proof is in the doing, not in the deciding to do. We also stress how critical it is for leaders to be positive, energetic, and hopeful. In tough times these are vital ingredients in becoming exemplary.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

As we wrote this book we kept in the forefront of our minds the emerging leaders—those who aspire to a leadership role,
those who are just beginning to supervise others, and those who must necessarily influence and work with other people to accomplish their objectives. We want *Learning Leadership* to be a guide you can use as you develop your self-concept as a leader and your ideas about what leadership means. We wanted to provide a framework that would help you create a context as well as foster a set of beliefs conducive to your growth and development.

In addition, *Learning Leadership* will be of great value to leadership developers, internal and external trainers, and coaches who are focused on building the next generation of leaders in their client organizations—as well as those who have a responsibility and need to help people be the best they can be. This includes supervisors and managers at all levels. The next generations of leaders need your wisdom and experience if they are going to excel and take your organizations to the next level.

According to recent studies, more than 50 percent of young people want to become leaders in their organizations, although they don’t necessarily view *organization* in a traditional way. We know that they also seek challenging assignments and are willing to work hard but that their greatest fear is that there’s a “lack of professional growth opportunity” in too many of their organizations. Their willingness to stick around may well be contingent upon how well leadership developers and managers respond to this need.

**HOW TO USE THIS BOOK**

We want you to *use* *Learning Leadership* and not just read it. To that end, we’ve divided the book into short, bite-sized chapters. Read during a train ride to work, while taking a break in your day, or in the evening when you want to spend some
time thinking about how you will enhance your leadership capabilities. Also, in each of the chapters that follow, there is a self-coaching action. It's something you can do in a few minutes right then, but you may want to return to these later when you have more time. For most of these actions, we strongly recommend you create a leadership journal. Journaling has been shown to be one of the most effective learning tools and significantly helps you embed the learning you derive from each chapter. Your journal can be just a spiral-bound notebook, something fancier, or an electronic file in your tablet or desktop. It'll be a place to store your reflections, responses, experiences, and lessons learned. And keep it handy. We have a feeling that you'll want to refer to it again and again.

Early reviewers of this book have told us that there’s a lot to do here. We agree. It can seem quite daunting. As with learning any set of skills, you must constantly practice if you want to improve. There’s no such thing as instant expertise. Putting these concepts into practice takes time, and for exemplary leaders, they believe that it's a lifelong learning journey.

Go at your own pace. People have different learning styles. You might want to read the entire text and then go back and do the self-coaching actions. You may want to take a section at a time and read it over a period of weeks or even months. You might want to do the coaching activities chapter by chapter. Use the ideas in this book in whatever way works for you. The point is that learning leadership requires practice, practice takes time, and you can learn to be a better leader than you are today.

Finally, give yourself a bit of grace. If you are serious about becoming a better leader, and willing to put in the time and effort, then don't forget to take care of yourself. Pace yourself. You can’t build muscle strength all at once; rest between exercises is necessary. Similarly, every suggestion you have for yourself, or others, will not be spot-on the first time. There will be setbacks.
Make sure you build an internal, possibly even external, support system that can get you through the inescapable missteps and disappointments along the leadership journey. You may lose some battles, but keep your eye on the bigger picture.

The world needs exemplary leaders. And it needs exemplary leaders at all levels and in all functions. Your constituents, as well as your colleagues, need you to become the best leader you can be. They need you to lead with your best self. They need you to become an exemplary leader not only for today; they need you to be exemplary tomorrow and into the future. We hope this book will be stimulating and informative on your journey to becoming an exemplary leader.

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Leadership potential isn’t something that some people have and other people don’t. It’s much more broadly distributed than traditionally accepted views suggest. You already have the capacity to lead, but some prevailing myths and assumptions about leadership get in the way of your becoming the best leader you can be. To become an exemplary leader, you have to move past the myths and get down to applying the fundamentals that will enable you to learn and grow as a leader.

Leadership is essential because it makes a significant difference in people’s levels of engagement, commitment, and performance. Developing your leadership capabilities will help you improve the way people around you feel about their workplace and promote more productive organizations. Learning to be a better leader also enhances your feelings of self-worth and meaningfulness.

Our research shows that a universal set of leadership practices is associated with exemplary leadership, and these practices are within the capacity of everyone to follow. The challenge is to increase the frequency with which you engage in these leadership practices and become more comfortable and confident in their use.
In the next three chapters we take a look at these key themes on becoming an exemplary leader:

- Leaders are born and so are you.
- Leadership makes a difference.
- You are already leading, just not frequently enough.
We’ve been writing and speaking about exemplary leadership for more than 30 years, and throughout that time there’s one question people ask us more often than any other. That most frequently asked question is some variation of “Are leaders born or made?” Maybe you’re wondering the same thing.

Our answer to that question has always been the same: We have never met a leader who was not born. We’ve also never met an accountant, artist, athlete, engineer, lawyer, physician, scientist, teacher, writer, or zoologist who was not born.

You might be thinking, “Well that’s not fair. That’s a trick question. Everyone is born.” That’s precisely our point. Every one of us is born, and every one of us has the necessary material to become a leader—including you. The question you should be asking yourself is not “Will I make a difference?” In becoming a better leader, the more demanding and significant question you should be asking is “How will I make the difference I want?”

And just for the record, no one has ever asked us, “Are managers born or made?”
Let’s get something straight right from the start. Leadership is not some mystical quality that only a few people have and everyone else doesn’t. Leadership is not preordained. Neither is it the private reserve of a special class of charismatic men and women. Leadership is not a gene. It is not a trait. There is just no hard evidence to suggest that leadership is imprinted in the DNA of some people and not others.

We’ve collected assessment data from millions of people around the world. We can tell you without a doubt that there are leaders in every profession, every type of organization, every religion, and every country, from young to old, male and female. It’s a myth that leadership can’t be learned—that you either have it, or you don’t. There is leadership potential everywhere we look.

Asking, “Are leaders born or made?” is not a very productive question. It’s the old nature versus nurture argument, and it doesn’t get at a more important question that must be asked and answered. The more useful question is “Can you, and those you work with, become better leaders than you are today?” The answer to that question is a resounding yes.

There are people who maintain that not everyone has the potential to lead and not everyone has the capacity to learn to lead. That’s because myths, misconceptions, and false assumptions about leadership create barriers to developing leaders at all levels. One of the first challenges on the path to exemplary leadership is to overcome these folk legends and false assumptions. They foster a model of leadership that is antithetical to the way real-life leaders operate. They also create unnecessary barriers to the revitalization of our organizations and communities.

Before we can examine evidence and examples of the mindsets that enable people just like you to become the best leaders they can be, we need to address some of the fables that keep people from thinking that they can provide leadership and be
leaders. Five myths inhibit learning to lead and contribute most to the misunderstandings about what leadership is and isn’t.

THE TALENT MYTH

The talent myth has captivated the training and development world for years, and some have come to accept it as the new gospel. If only you search far and wide, and long and hard, you’ll be able to identify the best and the brightest leaders and then place them in all the existing leadership roles. Problem solved. No training required; just find the right person. Well, good luck with that.

Talent is overrated. Florida State University professor and noted authority on expertise K. Anders Ericsson and his colleagues have found, over the 30 years of their research, that raw talent is not all there is to becoming a top performer. It doesn’t matter whether it’s in sports, music, medicine, computer programming, mathematics, or other fields; talent is not the key that unlocks excellence. In studying what it takes to succeed and how people reach their goals, Professor Heidi Grant Halvorson at Columbia Business School, reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that the emphasis on talent, smarts, and innate ability has done more harm than good. As she points out, there’s a vast difference between “being good” and “getting better.”

Leadership is not a talent that you have or you don’t. In fact, it is not a talent but an observable, learnable set of skills and abilities. Leadership is distributed in the population like any other set of skills.

For more than three decades we have been fortunate to study the stories of thousands of ordinary people who have led others to make extraordinary things happen. There are millions more stories and examples. The belief that leadership is available only to a talented few is a far more powerful deterrent
to development than anything else is. It prevents too many people from even trying, let alone excelling.

To become a better leader than you are right now, the first fundamental thing you have to do is to believe you can be a better leader and that you can learn to improve your leadership skills and abilities. Without that belief, there’s no training or coaching that’s going to do much good.

**THE POSITION MYTH**

This myth associates leadership with a hierarchal position. It assumes that when you have a position at the top, you’re automatically a leader. It assumes that leadership is a title and that if you don’t have a title of authority, you aren’t a leader. It assumes that leadership starts with a capital *L*.

Every day, the mass media and routine conversations perpetuate this myth. People write and talk about how the recent turnaround of an organization was because of what *the* chief executive officer (CEO) did or that *the* founder of a new start-up was responsible for a multibillion-dollar valuation. It’s as if people at the top, or those with the highest rank and the most privilege, are the only ones who ever do anything extraordinary. Nonsense.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Leadership is not a rank, a title, or a place. Look it up in the dictionary. You’ll find that leadership starts with a lowercase *l*. And the word *lead* literally comes from an Old English word meaning “to go” or “to guide.” That’s what leadership is about: going places and guiding others. You could be a CEO, but it’s much more likely that you are a parent, coach, teacher, frontline worker, middle manager, volunteer, community activist, or concerned citizen. Every student of history knows that world-changing movements have been initiated and led by people without title, rank, or tenure.
It’s also true that those who made it to the top didn’t start there. More than likely, they got there because they learned leadership skills along the way. Again, you don’t have to be at the top to lead; you can lead from any direction. Leadership is much more about what you do than it is about where you are sitting.

Leading is about the actions you take, not the position you hold. It’s about the values that guide your decisions and actions. It’s about the visions you have for yourself and others. To become an exemplary leader, the second fundamental is that you have to aspire to excel. You have to aim for something greater, dream of something better, and strive for something nobler than what exists right now. You have principles that guide you and that transform and lift people up to become their best selves.

THE STRENGTHS MYTH

From the ancient literature on leadership that searched for the individual kissed by the gods (charisma) to historical great man approaches (already limited by gender biases), people have been searching for a formula or magic elixir that explains leadership success. The current fascination is with the concept of strengths.

Now there’s nothing inherently wrong with the notion that there are certain skills, knowledge, and attitudes that produce higher levels of performance in a task, whether it’s sales, engineering, nursing, or hospitality. Leadership is required of all professions, and it has its own set of skills and abilities. So far, so good. But the strengths approach has been misapplied to mean that you should take on only tasks in which you are strong, not waste your time attending to your weaknesses, and in areas where you aren’t strong and don’t have natural talent, you or the organization should assign those tasks to other people.
That’s not to say that people shouldn’t attend to their strengths or that they aren’t happier and more successful if they’re using their strengths at work and in other aspects of their lives, but the emphasis on strengths has fundamentally discouraged people from challenging themselves to become better leaders. They can just throw up their hands and say, “Well, envisioning the future just isn’t a strength of mine, so I’m not going to become very good at it.” Or, “I’m not very comfortable letting people know how much I appreciate their accomplishments.” First, ignoring feedback about areas that you are not good at is inconsistent with a lot of research on learning (which we’ll talk about later). Second, it’s not very motivating to tell people to give up before they even start or the first time things don’t go as well as expected. Finally, this thinking is impractical. Organizations can’t bring in a new person every time someone makes a mistake or there’s a new challenge that someone initially didn’t have the skills and abilities to handle.

Over all the years we’ve been researching leadership, we’ve consistently found that adversity and uncertainty characterize every personal-best leadership experience (explained further in Chapter 3). Typically, they’re challenges people have never faced before. Because this is true, the third fundamental of becoming an exemplary leader is challenge yourself. When confronting things they haven’t done before, people will often have to develop new skills and overcome existing weaknesses and limitations. They make mistakes and may even feel incompetent. If people built only on strengths, they would likely not challenge themselves or their organizations. You simply can’t do your best without searching for new experiences, doing things you’ve never done, making mistakes, and learning from them. Challenge is an important stimulus for leadership and for learning.
THE SELF-RELIANCE MYTH

No one ever made anything extraordinary happen alone. Leaders cannot possibly design breakthrough innovations, produce high-quality products, provide awesome service, attract raving fans, break sales records, ensure financial soundness and integrity, and build great places to work without the trust, teamwork, strength, and capabilities of everyone in the organization. Leadership is a team sport and not a solo performance.

Yet, there’s folklore about the leader as hero who magnetizes a band of followers with courageous acts or the leader as rebel who charges headlong into the winds of resistance without regard for life or convention. There are myths about prescient visionaries with Merlin-like powers who save kingdoms, companies, industries, or nations. All this perpetuates a belief that leaders have to be self-reliant and superhuman. They have to be able to take care of themselves and get things done without the help of anyone else. They have to be independent and autonomous and never express doubts about their abilities. They can never appear in need of support or assistance; stiff upper lip, don’t break a sweat, and all that balderdash.

Although there is certainly great benefit to being confident in your abilities to handle challenging situations, the best leaders know they can’t do it alone. They know they need the support, engagement, and commitment of others. Isn’t it intriguing to note that world-class athletes all have coaches, often more than one? These coaches are revered and celebrated—and thanked at every awards ceremony. Yet, rarely will you hear leaders even admit to having had a coach in the past, let alone one in the present, or broadcast about the training and development program they attended that helped them build their skills. They probably believe that people would consider it a weakness if they did, but just as leaders can’t make extraordinary
things happen all by themselves, they can’t become exemplary leaders by themselves either. That’s why the fourth fundamental is to engage support in your learning and growth.

**THE IT-COMES-NATURALLY MYTH**

A corollary to the myths of talent and strengths is that leadership comes naturally to those who are the best at leading. People admire those who make it seem so easy and attribute that ease to natural ability. Whether it’s a performer on stage, an athlete on the court, or a leader in an organization, people assume effortless performance develops without effort. Although there may be a small percentage for whom this is true, for the vast majority this is just not so.

K. Anders Ericsson, quoted earlier, made this same point when he said, “Until most individuals recognize that sustained training and effort is a prerequisite for reaching expert levels of performance, they will continue to misattribute lesser achievement to the lack of natural gifts, and will thus fail to reach their own potential.”

Anders and his colleagues have found in their research that raw talent is not the only requisite to becoming a top performer. Staggeringly high IQs don’t characterize the great performers, either. What actually differentiates the expert performers from the good performers is their dedication to doing something every day to improve. The truth is that the best leaders become the best because they work hard at it and put in the hours of practice. Therefore, the fifth fundamental of becoming an exemplary leader is to practice deliberately.

Point this observation out to would-be leaders, and they often react by saying, “I don’t have the time to practice. I’m already working 10 to 12 hours a day. It’s just not possible to add on another couple of hours a day to practice leading.” We’d
agree that you don’t have any hours to add to your day. The knack is finding methods for turning your organization into a practice field and not just a playing field. There are ways you can structure your interactions with others so they become intentional practice routines. Practice is the antecedent of learning. The fundamental principle is that you have to put considerable effort into learning to lead to make leadership look effortless. No surprise that the more you practice, the easier it gets. That’s why it’s been said that amateurs make it look hard, and professionals make it look easy.

THE KEY MESSAGE AND ACTION

The key message in this chapter is this: Leadership potential and skills aren’t talents that some people have and other people don’t. They are much more broadly distributed than traditional legends suggest. You already have the capacity to lead, but some prevailing myths and assumptions about leadership get in the way of your becoming the best leader you can be. In the remainder of this book, let’s confront those assumptions and learn about five fundamentals that you can apply to bust the myths and strengthen your capacity to lead and to make a difference.

SELF-COACHING ACTION

At the beginning of this chapter, we asked, “Can you, and those you work with, become better leaders than you are today?” Affirm that your answer is yes. Say aloud or silently to yourself, “I can become a better leader than I am today.” Tell that to yourself daily. Make it a daily affirmation.

The next thing you should do is start a leadership journal that you can regularly use as you travel along on your leadership
development journey. Professor Nancy Adler, McGill University, finds that the best way to access the insights you gain from your experiences is to reflect on them daily. “Based on research (my own and others’) and many years of work with global business leaders as a consultant and international management professor,” she says, “I recommend the simple act of regularly writing in a journal.”\(^7\) So, purchase a notebook or open up a document on your computer or tablet to record your daily reflections. We’ll be asking you throughout this book to write down some thoughts and ideas, so make this leadership journal something you can refer to more than this once.\(^8\)

For your first assignment in your leadership journal, write down three aspects of your leadership in which you’d like to become better. Maybe it’s about further strengthening something you now do well. Maybe it’s an area that isn’t a strong suit but is one you feel is important to improve.

Pick one area to start. Let's say it’s asking for feedback. Now write down all the ways you can think of that you could become better at asking for feedback. Don’t worry at this moment whether they are practical; just brainstorm a list for yourself.

Select something from that list that you can and will do. Then, choose one colleague or friend you can trust to keep you honest in executing on it. Tell that person what you plan to do, and ask her or him to contact you daily and just ask, “Did you do what you said you would do?”

You need to start sometime, so why not now?
Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner have been working together for more than 30 years, studying leaders, researching leadership, conducting leadership development seminars, and serving as leaders themselves in various capacities. They are coauthors of the award-winning, best-selling book The Leadership Challenge, now in its fifth edition. Since its first edition in 1987, The Leadership Challenge has sold more than 2 million copies worldwide, and it is available in 21 languages. It has won numerous awards, including the Critics’ Choice Award from the nation’s book review editors and the James A. Hamilton Hospital Administrators’ Book of the Year Award; has been named a Best Business Book of the Year (2012) by Fast Company; and was selected as one of the top 10 books on leadership in Jack Covert and Todd Sattersten’s The 100 Best Business Books of All Time.

Jim and Barry have coauthored more than a dozen other award-winning leadership books, including The Truth About Leadership: The No-Fads, Heart-of-the-Matter Facts You Need to Know; Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It; Encouraging the Heart: A Leader’s Guide to
Rewarding and Recognizing Others; A Leader’s Legacy; The Student Leadership Challenge; Extraordinary Leadership in Australia and New Zealand: The Five Practices That Create Great Workplaces (with Michael Bunting); Turning Adversity into Opportunity; Finding the Courage to Lead; Great Leadership Creates Great Workplaces; Making Extraordinary Things Happen in: Applying The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership Asia (with Steve DeKrey); and The Academic Administrator’s Guide to Exemplary Leadership.

They also developed the highly acclaimed Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), a 360-degree questionnaire for assessing leadership behavior, which is one of the most widely used leadership assessment instruments in the world. More than 700 research studies, doctoral dissertations, and academic papers have used The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership framework they developed.

Jim and Barry have received the Association for Talent Development’s highest award for their Distinguished Contribution to Workplace Learning and Performance. In addition, they have been named Management/Leadership Educators of the Year by the International Management Council, ranked by Leadership Excellence magazine in the top 20 on its list of the Top 100 Thought Leaders, named among the 50 Top Coaches in the United States (according to Coaching for Leadership), ranked as Top 100 Thought Leaders in Trustworthy Business Behavior by Trust Across America, listed among HR magazine’s Most Influential International Thinkers, and included among the list of today’s Top 50 Leadership Thinkers by Inc. magazine.

Jim and Barry are frequent keynote speakers, and each has conducted numerous leadership development programs for corporate and for-purpose organizations around the globe. These include Alberta Health Services, ANZ Bank, Apple, Applied Materials, Association of California Nurse Leaders, AT&T, Australia
About the Authors


Jim Kouzes is the Dean’s Executive Fellow of Leadership, Leavey School of Business at Santa Clara University, and lectures on leadership around the world to corporations, governments, and nonprofits. He is a highly regarded leadership scholar and an experienced executive; the Wall Street Journal cited him as one of the 12 best executive educators in the United States. In 2010, Jim received the Thought Leadership Award from the Instructional Systems Association, the most prestigious award given by the trade association of training and development industry providers. He was listed as one of HR magazine’s Most Influential International Thinkers for 2010 through 2012, named one of the 2010 through 2016 Top 100 Thought Leaders in Trustworthy Business Behavior by Trust Across America and honored as one of its Lifetime Achievement recipients in 2015, cited by the Association of Corporate Executive Coaches
as the 2015 International Executive Coach Thought Leader of Distinction, and selected by Global Gurus as one of the Top 30 Leadership Gurus in 2015. In 2006, Jim was presented with the Golden Gavel, the highest honor awarded by Toastmasters International. Jim served as president, CEO, and chairman of the Tom Peters Company from 1988 through 2000 and prior to that led the Executive Development Center at Santa Clara University (1981–1988). Jim founded the Joint Center for Human Services Development at San Jose State University (1972–1980) and was on the staff of the School of Social Work, University of Texas. His career in training and development began in 1969 when he conducted seminars for Community Action Agency staff and volunteers in the war on poverty. Following graduation from Michigan State University (BA degree with honors in political science), he served as a Peace Corps volunteer (1967–1969). Jim can be reached at jim@kouzes.com.

**Barry Posner** is the Accolti Endowed Professor of Leadership at the Leavey School of Business, Santa Clara University, where he served as dean of the school for 12 years. He has been a distinguished visiting professor at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Sabanci University (Istanbul), and the University of Western Australia. At Santa Clara he has received the President’s Distinguished Faculty Award, the School’s Extraordinary Faculty Award, and several other teaching and academic honors. Barry has been named one of his nation’s top management/leadership educators by the International Management Council, recognized as one of the Top 50 leadership coaches in America and Top 100 Thought Leaders in Trustworthy Business Behavior, ranked among the Most Influential HR Thinkers in the world, and listed among the Top Leadership and Management Experts in the world by *Inc.* magazine. An internationally renowned scholar and educator, Barry has authored or coauthored more than 100 research and practitioner-focused articles. He
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Barry received his BA with honors in political science from the University of California, Santa Barbara; his MA in public administration from The Ohio State University; and his PhD in organizational behavior and administrative theory from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Having consulted with a wide variety of public and private sector organizations worldwide, Barry also works at a strategic level with a number of community-based and professional organizations. He has served on the board of directors of EMQ FamiliesFirst, the Global Women’s Leadership Network, American Institute of Architects (AIA), Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Santa Clara County, Center for Excellence in Nonprofits, Junior Achievement of Silicon Valley and Monterey Bay, Public Allies, San Jose Repertory Theater, Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity, as well as publicly traded and start-up companies. Barry can be reached at bposner@scu.edu.
To learn more about The Leadership Challenge, please visit www.leadershipchallenge.com