**How To Lead**

**By David M. Rubenstein**

**Book Excerpts**

**Introduction:**

“Why should anyone really want to be a leader?... First, a leader can create the type of change or results that will improve the lives of others. Second, a leader can motivate others to become leaders, and in turn improve other’s lives. And third, a leader can feel a sense of accomplishment and achievement that provides human fulfillment and happiness.”

“When I talk to a student or young adult leaders, I often say that life generally can be divided into thirds. The first third is getting an education or training for a future career; The second third is focusing on building your career, perfecting skills, rising to a senior position or position of responsibility and leadership; and the final third involves receiving the benefits - financial, psychic, public recognition - from a level of achievement attained in the second of these phases.”

“…what were the attributes that enabled me to go from something of a non-leader in my first phase of life to a leader in the second and third?”

1. Luck
2. Desire to Succeed
3. Pursuit of Something New and Unique
4. Hard Work/Long Hours
5. Focus
6. Failure
7. Persistence
8. Persuasiveness
9. Humble Demeanor
10. Credit-Sharing
11. The Ability To Keep Learning
12. Integrity
13. Responding to Crises

**Part One: Visionaries**

**Jeff Bezos:**

Everyone wants to know how Jeff built Amazon became so successful in such a relatively short period. He reveals a few secrets in this interview: being willing to take chances and fail, focusing on the long term, placing customers first, getting a full night's sleep, not making key decisions too early or too late in the day, and having supportive parents.

“Everything I've done has started small...”

“All my best decisions in business and in life are made with heart, intuition, guts, not analysis.”

“I talk so often to other CEO's and founders and entrepreneurs, and I can tell that even though they're talking about customers, the really focusing on competitors. It is a huge advantage to any company if you can stay focused on your customer instead of your competitor.”

“Most of our regrets are acts of omission. The things we didn't try. It's the path untraveled. Those are the things that haunt us.”

“We don't have enough time for me to list all our failed experiments. But the big winners pay for thousands of failed experiments.”

“…as a senior executive, what do you really get paid to do? You get paid to make the small number of high-quality decisions. Your job is to not to make thousands of decisions every day. If I make three good decisions a day, that's enough. Warren Buffett says he's good if he makes 3 good decisions a year. I really believe that... All of our senior executives operate the same way I do. They work in the future; they live in the future. None of the people report to me should really be focused on the current quarter.”

“When we've tried dabbling in something that's a ‘me-too’ service, we tend to get beaten. It doesn't work. Our culture is much better at pioneering and inventing.”

**Bill Gates:**

His unrivaled success seems to be due to a combination of vision, intellect, drive, and focus. Many individuals have one or two of those elements, but few have all four.

“... The idea that you find an innovation, really stick to it, build a team behind it, have some setbacks and successes - that theory of change (builds a great organization).”

“You always know you could be doing better, that you should learn more, be building the team and thinking about things in a better way. You see the positive results, but you always want to do even better.”

**Sir Richard Branson:**

“Being a really good listener is one of the most key things.”

“Another key thing is loving people - the genuine love of everybody, and looking for the best in people. Even if they're being a pain, you can normally find the best in pretty well anybody.”

“Surrounding yourself with great people. Learning to delegate early on - not trying to do everything yourself. Making sure you've got the kind of people who are praising the team around them, not criticizing them. And having people who are willing to really innovate, be bold, and create something that everybody who works for the company can be really proud of.”

**Oprah Winfrey:**

“What we all want is to be able to live out the truest, highest expression of ourselves as a human being. That doesn't end until you take your last breath. What is the truest, highest vision that you hold for yourself? No matter where you are in life, there's always the next level. There's always next level, to the last breath.”

“… every argument that you ever have, every encounter, the other person just wants to know, Did you hear me? Did you see me? And did I say anything that mattered?”

**Warren Buffett:**

“We bought businesses that we thought were decent businesses at sensible prices, and we had good people to run them.”

“Money has no utility to me. Time has utility to me. But money, in terms of making trips or owning more houses or having a boat or something, it has no utility to me whatsoever.”

“Over time, I've assembled this wonderful group of people, many of whom are personal friends. They make my life easy.”

“Look for the job that you would want to hold if you didn't need a job. You're probably only going to live once. You don't want to go sleepwalking through life.”

“... Don't settle for something if you can (avoid it), don't worry about making the most money this week or next month…Look for the job that turns you on. Find a passion.”

**Phil Knight:**

“Hollywood will portray a leader as tall and handsome and strong jawed. A lot of times, the real good leaders are just the opposite. First of all, they've got to want it. But they come in all shapes and sizes, and I don't know that there's any one lesson.”

**Ken Griffin:**

“I had to learn to delegate. If I look at our success over the last 30 years, it really comes down to having learned to trust people, to trust their judgment, had to delegate to skilled people.

“The market is rarely dead wrong. The history books are littered with people who are smarter than the market who have lost all their money. When you're in an investment and it's not working out, you really need to take a step back: ‘What I don't understand in this situation?’ If you really think you’ve resolved all the unknowns you can possibly get your head around, you stay with your position. But in the history of finance, the failure stories are people who do not respect the market.”

“So, you quickly come to terms with the fact that we may not survive, and it may be an exogenous event in some sense that causes us to fail. I had to accept that reality. Once I had accepted that reality, what were the best decisions we could make to survive?... That was a playbook we came to work with every day: we are going to fight to survive, knowing we might fail. But we are not going to give up.”

“99.9% of the decisions we make, my colleagues are making. I want the individual closest to the information was good judgment to make the call.”

“I have interviewed, ballpark, 10,000 people in my career. I will do two interviews today. I will do two interviews tomorrow. I am always, looking for talent.”

“I'm looking for two key drivers in a candidate. I'm looking for the passion. Do they actually love what they do?... The second driver is I'm looking for clear accomplishment. I'm looking for individuals who have a demonstrated track record of having made good decisions and having accomplished things in their lives.”

“If you look at the success of Citadel, we are far more than the sum of the parts. When you can put together the right team with the right mission, you can accomplish great things.”

**Robert F. Smith**

“America is a great place so long as you're willing to work hard, and drive forward on a set of principles and ideals that are important and authentic. (advice from his grandfather)”

“We took these kernels of best practices and, in essence, have now developed a whole systemic approach: ‘Here's how you use this best practice to improve the efficacy of whatever that functional area is within that company.’… The way I like to think about it, we install the best practices in those businesses that actually cracked the Rubik's Cube of profitable growth. Not only are we increasing the profit margins, we actually can accelerate the growth of those businesses at the same time.”

**Jamie Dimon:**

“I wear the jersey every day, I'm not a hired gun. I'm going to bleed for the company and give it everything I've got and then hand it off to someone else. I don't like people who work at a company and talk about it like it's a third party. It's not a third party to me. This is what I do. I don't do what I do for the compensation.”

“To me, the thing is to make the company as good as she can, and it actually creates all the opportunities you have.”

“When you come down to Washington as a businessperson, the interests of the country should be put before the interests of your industry or your company. Businesses are constantly coming down here asking for that one little thing that helps them. I hear these horror stories. Just do what's right for the damn country. Your business is going to be fine. In fact, your business we better off if the country is strong.”

**Part Two: Transformers:**

**Eric Schmidt:**

“Larry and Sergey invented something called 20% time. The idea is that if the employees, especially the engineers, are interested in something, they can spend 20% of their time on whatever they are interested in.”

“I don't think it matters where you start, but you need to be incredibly good at that One Thing and then you broaden your skills. Discipline, hard work, and loving what you do will get you very far.”

**Tim Cook:**

“When you work at Apple, there's a high expectation on everyone to perform and to contribute. Because of that high bar, you never quite get there - including the CEO, including every job in there. So, I never feel that way very long if I ever felt that way.” (on being asked how he maintains his modest demeanor)

**Ginni Rometty:**

“… for anybody running a company in this day and age, one of the things you need is speed.

“We've hired every design graduate there is on this planet. And the idea is that everything used, like your phone, is simple. We're an enterprise company, business to business. But that same simplicity should be found in our work too. Whatever you're building, the process has to start with the end user in mind. Next thing, we built agility at scale. Easy to say; super hard thing to do. But we've done it. It means that you train people and how to be agile, in small, multidisciplinary groups. And they work incrementally, producing minimum viable products. They are also co-located, which goes to your question about mobility.”

“I believe our transformation mirrors what every company is going through. You'll rebuild yourself around data and the cloud. You're going to have to change how you do the work. And you're going to have to work on who the people are who do the work.”

“... If someone said, only name one thing you did, I think it's this idea of being a constant learner, of always been willing to say to yourself, you don't know everything, and you can learn something from whoever.”

“When we hire, we look for a propensity to learn, not just what you know in the moment, because it's so temporal.”

**Indra Nooyi**

“The most important thing is to keep both ears open, because you never know if nugget of an idea can actually translate to a big success in the company. One of the things I've learned is not to dismiss the ideas. I catalogue all the ideas I get, then I send it out to my people, saying, “Hey, I listened to this group of people talk about our products and this is what I heard. Is there something here? Should we be doing something about it?’ So, I listen to everybody.”

“… technology disruption is absolutely rewriting the rules of most companies. What kind of jobs are you going to keep in the company? How are you going to digitize your value chain? How is ecommerce going to impact your business? There is some technology that's impacting every part of the company.”

“We do videos, we do emails, we do town halls and forums every quarter. Every time I travel, we meet with the employees and I do town halls in that town or country. Occasionally I write very personal letters to the employee base as a whole. For example, when my kids were going to college, I wrote a personal letter to everybody saying, ‘I am going through tremendous separation angst.’ Or if I felt their employees were not calling their parents often enough, I’d write a letter about why it's important they call their parents. Whatever is on my mind on a personal basis. I want them to know me as a person rather than just an executive. I am very accessible to them, and I talk to everybody, from the front line to my senior executives.”

“Can you have it all? That's a big question. If you have the right support system, if you have an understanding spouse, if you want to be married, and if you're willing to make all the trade-offs that you need to make, you can have it all. But while you do all that, there will be heartache, there will be pain, there will be some collateral damage underneath the surface. You have got to live with that.”

**Part Three: Commanders**

**President George W. Bush**

“Humility. It's really important to know what you don't know and listen to people who know what you don't know.” (when asked what is the most important quality of a president)

**President Bill Clinton**

“The most important thing is to be humble, to listen, to realize everybody's got a story…”

**General Colin Powell:**

*What makes a person a great leader:* “A person who understands that they're leading followers. The person who understands that they are there to put a group of human beings into work that has value, that has a purpose, and that the leader will give them the inspiration needed to achieve that purpose, and the leader will make sure they have everything they need to get the job done.”

**General David Petraeus:**

Four critical tasks of strategic leadership from the very top: 1) getting the big ideas (i.e., strategy) right; 2) communicating the big ideas effectively throughout the organization; 3) overseeing the implementation of the big ideas; and 4) engaging in a process to determine how the big ideas need to be revised and refined in response to what has been learned and to changing circumstances.

“Each of those four tasks has subtasks, of course. Overseeing the implementation includes metrics. It has your battle with them; How do you spend your own time? We had a whole matrix for a generic three-month period showing how I sought to spend my time. You have to provide energy, example, encouragement, determination, and so on. And you have to drive the campaign's execution...”

**Condoleezza Rice:**

Condi makes clear that she thinks great leaders, like Nelson Mandela have a vision of where they want the world to go, and they typically have the requisite intelligence and humility to get their followers to move that vision forward. In Condi's view, arrogance and hubris are generally not going to enable leaders to fulfill a vision and attract followers.

“There are lots of sources of political risk. Look around corners. Look at your industry and say, ‘What are my sources of political risk? And, what's my risk appetite? We didn't want to say, ‘Don't do things because they're risky.”

“Integrity is at the center of being a great leader. Once you lose people's trust, you have nothing. Great leaders are visionaries. By that I mean, they see the world as it should be, not as it is.

“Most importantly I think great leaders have a sense of humility about what they can achieve...”

“If you're going to lead, and if you're going to be successful, the first thing is try to be twice as good. In other words, work hard enough to be confident and then work hard enough to be twice as good. Secondly… never consider yourself a victim, because when you think you're a victim, you've given control of your life to somebody else. You may not be able to control your circumstances, but you can control your response to your circumstances. Thirdly, something that I particularly tell minority kids and woman and others from populations that have been in one way or another marginalized... Don’t be disabled by people who may have prejudice.”

**James A. Baker III:**

“Prior preparation prevents poor performance.”

“I was brought up to believe that if you start something, you finish it, or you do everything you can to finish it.”

“Here's what I really think was the best thing for me: I had tremendous associates and assistants. They really performed beautifully. I was the beneficiary of a lot of that.”

“We absolutely have to understand that one of the biggest threats facing our country and facing our democracy is the political dysfunction we have today. When I was there 25 years ago with Reagan, with Bush, with forward, we reached across the aisle and we got things done. It happened with Carter. It happened with Clinton. That doesn't happen anymore. That's truly tragic. There are a lot of reasons for it. But we need to cure that.”

**Part Four: Decision-Makers**

**Representative Nancy Pelosi:**

“… I do think there's something to be said for experience, knowledge, judgment, and surrounding yourself with people who know things. I always say to people, when they said they want to run for office, ‘What is your vision for our country?’ ‘What is your why?’ ‘Why should we be attracted to what you have to say?’ What do you know about your subject, your focus?’... ‘What is your strategic thinking about issues, how to get something done?’ And, how do you draw people into your orbit so that you are a leader and can advance in that?”

“We (other female leaders) to be a model to women. Do not fear any of this, have no fear. Know your own power. Be yourself. Go out there and fight the fight because you know your why. You know why you decided to get into the arena. You know what you care about. You know how to get the job done, and you can draw support from other people.”

“Be yourself. Authenticity is everything. Sincerity and authenticity is everything. Don’t try to be somebody else, be yourself and be ready, be ready.”

**Christine LaGarde:**

“There is a very clear economic case now that the more woman on the board, the more women on the executive committees and management teams, the better the returns, the better the results, the better the profits. So, even if you have a very, very cold hard, no moral imperatives, and no sympathy for women and for the principle of inclusion, you have to consider including women and bringing them to the table and to all tables.”

**Dr. Anthony Fauci:**

“One of the things I tell people, because I feel that strongly, is that if you’re leading an organization of some sort that has a purpose or a mandate, you’ve got to articulate to the people you are leading exactly what your vision is and where you want the organization to go. I’ve seen instances where there wasn’t good leadership, where an organization is almost rudderless. They don’t know where they’re supposed to be going. 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.”

**Part Five: Masters**

**Jack Nicklaus**

Jack attributed success in multiple areas to his belief in himself and what he could achieve. He makes clear that any successful person must believe in what he or she is trying to accomplish if success is going to be the result, i.e., a high degree of self-confidence.

“Your mind is a big part of it. You've got to believe in what you can do. You've got to learn to play within yourself - in all walks of life. I don't care what business you're in, you need to work within yourself... And then you need to do what you can do, not with somebody else can do. You start believing in that. Winning breeds winning.”

“My greatest goal is just to see my kids continue to progress and my grandkids grow and be on the right path.”

**Mike Krzyzewski**

“The very first thing is that in order to get better, you change limits. And when you change limits, you're going to look back and you're going to fail…The other thing is that you're not going to get there alone. Be on a team. Surround yourself with good people and learn how to listen. You're not going to learn with you just talking. And when you do talk, converse. Don't make excuses. Figure out the solution. You don't have to figure it out by yourself.”

**Renee Fleming:**

“I don't have a wish list. What I do have is an open mind, and belief in the future. I absolutely believe that things come to us if we work hard, we're dedicated, we love what we're doing, and we're passionate.”

**Yo-Yo-Ma:**

“Winning awards is fabulous because it gives you more chances to do something that you might wish to do... But with awards we're talking about external recognition versus internal satisfaction, fulfillment. What I've learned is that you go for an external goal and if you achieve it, the pleasure is momentary. It's sort of like, ‘Great. You've got an award fantastic period now what?”

”There are different levels of pleasure, right? There are levels of deep fulfillment and this is where the loose term I’m going to use - culture- comes along. If you do things in arts and sciences, in culture, you wish to build something that's a strong enough building block that someone else can build on top of it.”

“It’s back to the old question. Who are people? Why do people do what they do? How do people learn? What is the meaning of why we live?... It's not a theoretical thing for me. If I have to play a performance on 4 hours sleep and I have to leave my family 2/3 of the time that we've had children growing up, you better have a good reason why you're doing that. So, you get to that existential level. You have to care. You have to have the reasons why it's important.”

**Lorne Michaels:**

“Because of my own experience, I know you don't want someone standing over your shoulder: you can’t hold creative people without loose reins. It's just the nature of how you manage creative people. So there you're there, and your present and available, but you're not always in their room.”

“… leadership in this particular field is the ability to change your mind and change your mind quite often. If a better idea comes in from a first-year writer, we will go with that... It's a culture that thrives on that. It is in status or hierarchy that determine it.”

“If you're in power, everybody knows it, so you don't ever have to explain you’re in power. When you are in a room with really talented people, you don't make many suggestions. Almost everything that you're going to suggest has been covered by someone... You lead by example. It's what you stand for and what your taste is, and mostly it’s about being right more often than you're not. Also pushing people forward, because in my case, people know that all that matters to me is whether this show is good or not.”