

INTRODUCTION

Mohandas Gandhi started his working life like any other professional and soon became a very successful attorney in the UK. He might have spent the rest of his life practicing law if he had not taken a trip to South Africa on behalf of a client at the age of twenty-four. It was a clear day in South Africa, 1893. Dressed in an elegant suit, Gandhi was traveling first class on a train when he was asked to move to third class because he was “colored.” When he produced his ticket to show his right to travel in a first-class compartment, he was asked how he even managed to buy a ticket because only whites were allowed to travel in first class. “I asked for it in the mail,” he said, “and as I am a citizen of the British Empire, I should be allowed to travel in first class just like any other citizen regardless of the color of my skin.” His protests yielded no results and he was physically thrown out of the train.

Upon meeting with members of the local community, he learned about the extent of segregation of people and life in South Africa. The plight of the people of color, along with his own experience on the train, really moved him. As an attorney, his first response was to legally challenge the validity of certain rules that severely restricted the freedom of colored people. Soon realizing that the goal of obtaining equal status for all people was unlikely to be achieved through litigation, he thought long and hard about what to do. He finally decided that his sole purpose from that point onward would be to champion the cause of equal rights for all. Considering how best to achieve his desired results, he decided that the very unfairness and violence he abhorred would *not* be used as a means to achieve his objectives. Non-violence would be his vehicle for his fight for freedom and equality. No one could have predicted that a frail brown man in a loincloth would

bring down a mighty empire without firing a bullet, yet that is exactly what he achieved.

There are other noteworthy aspects of Gandhi's story. One: Gandhi had no position, title, or formal authority over anyone. He never held any political or military office, did not possess any material wealth, and could not boast of any scientific achievement or extraordinary abilities. Yet millions followed him, were ready to lay down their lives for his cause. Two: Living the way he did was neither comfortable nor glamorous. If he wanted material success and comfort, he would have been much better off as an attorney. He regularly made himself very unpopular, was jailed several times, and was often physically attacked, including the final gunshot that killed him in 1948. Was Gandhi unaware of the dangers involved? Did he do what he did for fame, fortune, and glory? More importantly, how did he manage to achieve the results he wanted without any formal authority or control of resources?

Contrast Gandhi's story with the modern-day manager in the corporate world. In asking bosses all over the world why it is so hard to be a good and effective leader, I have heard a host of reasons, largely due to the increasing complexity of business today. In the good old days, they tell me, the life of a business leader was reasonably straightforward. You had a set of agreed-upon business objectives, a set of direct reports, and the rest of your organization below your direct reports. All the people and resources needed to achieve business objectives were under your control. Aligning people in the pursuit of common goals was straightforward—you controlled both the carrots and the sticks.

They go on to talk about how difficult life in business is today by contrast, and why it is almost impossible to be an effective leader. Below is a sampling of actual quotes from the mouths of surprisingly senior bosses:

- "I live in a highly complicated matrix structure and have long given up trying to make sense of it."

- “I am responsible for achieving results, but have little or no authority over people and resources that are critical for success.”
- “I am accountable to three managers.”
- “I am responsible for leading the business (P&L, compliance, operations, technology) as well as for leading people (pay, performance, morale). One person cannot possibly do all of it effectively.”
- “I have limited control over either carrot or stick.”
- “My bonus depends on my 360-degree feedback scores, so I cannot afford to rub too many people the wrong way.”
- “The head office, the control department, the strategic planning group, and many other corporate functions make huge demands on my time, leaving me very little time to do my day job.”
- “‘Continuous change’ is the mantra, and lots of management processes (fads) are introduced regularly to supposedly make our lives easier.”
- “My people are constantly looking toward me for answers I simply don’t have.”

In short, life, according to our current bosses, is a constant struggle to get results without having adequate authority. Isn’t it draining just to read their comments?

“Of all the bosses you’ve had in your career, how many would you call truly great leaders? For the purpose of this question, a great leader is someone who inspired you to show up every morning and do your best possible work, someone who made you believe in yourself, someone who

genuinely cared about your success, and someone whom you wanted to follow willingly.”

As a leadership and management consultant and educator, I have asked this question of thousands of business executives in every continent across a wide range of industries. I have asked groups of senior folks at the twilight of their careers, as well as upcoming middle managers. **Regardless of context, geography, or cultural differences, the average answer in any group lies somewhere between zero and two.** Given the abundance of research and literature on the subject, and the sums invested by companies every year on leadership development, this low average is baffling. Unlike molecular computing or the study of AIDS, leadership is not an evolving science. In fact, the definition of good leadership hasn't changed since the time of Alexander the Great. Why, then, is the average answer so low?

In good economic times (unlike the recession at the time of this writing), one might be tempted to think, “How does it matter? In spite of this low average, companies around the world seem to be doing fairly well.” When the going is good, bad leadership often goes undetected. However, consider the next question, which I have asked over the past twenty years, mostly through good times:

“On a one-to-ten scale where ten is at peak potential and one is significantly below potential, how would you rate your organization’s current performance in the marketplace?”

Again, I have asked this of a very large number of leaders and teams across the globe. I typically ask this one when I have an entire senior leadership team in a room for a workshop or team meeting. The average answer to this question is roughly 6.5. In other words, barring a few exceptions, the business world, by its own estimate, is operating at 65 percent of its potential. Whichever way you look at it, there is a huge performance void, arguably caused by a leadership void.

According to the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD), U.S. corporations alone spend \$134.39 billion every year on employee training. And companies spend an average of 24 percent to 30 percent of their training budgets on leadership development. One

has to ask whether this roughly \$40.47 billion is being well spent. Most of this training is based on formulas or on emulating successful leaders. Some researchers look at charisma and personality, and prescribe makeover formulas. Others offer copycat strategies in the name of best-practice research. A popular example is the case method, widely used at some of the finest business schools. It has become the “be all, end all” solution for teaching leadership and, in my opinion, is heavily overused. I can understand cases about failure and learning from the situation. If, however, the case is about a success story, and students are asked to emulate the success formula of the protagonist, it is a waste of time because emulation is, by definition, an act of followership, not leadership. Another common practice is creating formulas about human situations, and prescribing behavior steps for each situation. There is no shortage of two-by-two matrices boxing all human situations in one of four types, and telling students to first recognize the situation, then follow the steps. If only the business of human emotions and motivation were that simple. Formulas can program computers but cannot train humans about leading fellow humans. Clearly, the \$40 billion investment is missing the mark.

For executives who complain about the increasing complexity of corporate life today, here is a thought: *Leaders achieve extraordinary results in spite of the environment, not because of it.* Effective leaders take it upon themselves to dig deep and find solutions to the most pressing problems of their times. They feel deeply about the inadequacies of current reality and decide to do something about it. They do not wait to be appointed to important positions before doing so. It is their deep desire to change the status quo that makes them leaders. When in trouble, the average modern boss says “If only . . .” and focuses on obstacles. Leaders ask “What if?” and focus on possibilities. They also achieve great results in spite of their own limitations. All leaders are human, and humans are imperfect. Even the greatest of leaders in history had imperfections. This book is not a study of how you can ensure that you and your team or company never run into trouble. There is no way to do that. This book is a study of what great leaders did right

even while they had imperfections and faced daunting problems, just like anyone else. For example, how did Howard Schultz create what we know today as the Starbucks Coffee Company out of nothing but a dream? How did he find the resources to grow a commodity company internationally even though he had no breakthrough technology or new science that fulfilled new consumer needs? How did Kiran Bedi, India's first female police officer, create so much positive change in a highly corrupt and male-dominated society? From where did she find the courage to fight single-handedly against armed mobs and powerful politicians? How did Alan Mulally, an outsider to the auto industry, lead such a spectacular turnaround at Ford? Throughout the book, you will find these and a host of other powerful stories about remarkable leadership. My purpose behind telling these stories is not to have you emulate their behavior, but to show you how they each discovered what leadership meant for them, and how they carried out their leadership agenda. Looking at the discovery process of these leaders should give us clues about the questions we need to ask ourselves in order to discover our own leadership.

So how did Gandhi, and how do other great leaders, accomplish so much? With all the investment in leadership development, what is the elusive key to effective leadership? In my view, it is that superior leadership requires incredible amounts of *emotional energy*—*the power to stay the course despite the most formidable of obstacles*. Emphasis is most often placed heavily on cerebral skills at the expense of appreciating this crucial source of leadership success. Again, leadership is not about competency models, personality traits, or formulas—it is about having the lasting energy to stay true to your vision for positive change even in the face of the most powerful resistance. Leaders who achieve exceptional results despite the toughest of challenges are able to do so because they know how to:

1. Identify sources of unlimited emotional energy to fuel themselves

2. Enlist a few co-leaders and align their energy toward a shared purpose
3. Galvanize the energy of large numbers of people to create sustainable collective success

In other words, leadership is all about energy. I define leadership as **the art of harnessing human energy toward the creation of a better future**. At the end of the day the difference between leaders and nonleaders is this: Leaders find the energy to stay on and fight, and energize others around them, while nonleaders give up. Energy can neither be learned in a classroom nor automatically acquired by accepting a big title or position of authority. Leadership energy must be discovered, and there is no shortcut to the discovery process. This book is all about how to discover your own leadership energy and how to help others in finding theirs.

In over twenty-two years at global blue-chip organizations, including American Express, HSBC, Goldman Sachs, Coca-Cola, and Morgan Stanley, I have learned a great deal about energizing oneself, enlisting and aligning co-leaders, and galvanizing the troops. I have held both line and staff jobs, and have managed large global teams in eight countries. Besides leading global teams myself, I have worked closely with some of the most famous corporate leaders of our times. For example, I watched closely as John Mack led his team through the toughest crisis in Morgan Stanley's storied history, and how he eventually saved the firm, while Dick Fuld, his neighbor across the street, was unable to do the same for Lehman Brothers. I also watched how Neville Isdell turned the Coca-Cola Company around at a time when two prior CEOs had less success. For twelve years, I observed how Harvey Golub and Ken Chenault delivered against the core mission of American Express—*to be the world's most respected service brand*—and brought the company back on a solid footing for sustainable growth. Later, while creating various training experiences for clients, I studied leaders like Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com, Jack Ma of Alibaba.com and Tom Gardner

of The Motley Fool. You will read about all of these leaders throughout this book. Their success had nothing to do with their personality or with the management techniques they used. They all had one thing in common: They were deeply moved by the inadequacies of current reality and wanted to do something about it. Furthermore, they were able to find the endless energy needed to stay the long course despite the formidable resistance. After finding their own sources of energy, they were able to energize others around them. Together with their teams, they harnessed human energy toward the creation of a better future.

My experience has taught me that there are several core principles regarding good leadership, which apply across all cultures and in all areas of business. A key question about leadership is, how do some leaders manage to stay in control and focused on their leadership agenda, while others buckle under the slightest of pressure? The first principle is that staying focused comes from maintaining your personal leadership energy, and that the only foolproof way to find, channel, and sustain your energy is to *clearly define your purpose and your values*. A fundamental purpose and associated set of values are the sources of personal energy, and once you develop laser-sharp clarity about them, you will have created a strong foundation for leading and earned the right to advance to the next phase of leadership—energizing others. In the first chapter of this book, I will lay out a simple set of questions that will help you define your purpose and values. No one disagrees when I say that the very foundation of leadership is to have full clarity of purpose and values. However, very few leaders are able to clearly describe their purpose and values when asked. The usual response I get is, “Hmm . . . That is a very deep question. No one has ever asked me that . . .” Coming as it does from very senior leaders, I find this response unacceptable. How can you call yourself a leader if you haven’t thought about your purpose and values? And you were waiting to be asked?

The second principle gets to the bottom of what leaders need to do to enlist and energize key influencers around them, one at a time. The world is far too complex for any one leader to have all the answers. We

need a team of co-leaders around us if we want to create a better future. This principle deals with what leaders need to do to enlist co-leaders in the journey. At the core of the principle is the insight that nobody can motivate another person because every individual comes premotivated. This does not mean, however, that a leader can't do anything to channel and harness that motivation to optimal effect. The good news is that, regardless of culture or industry, each individual has expectations for their work that fall into three buckets—*Role, Environment, and Development (RED)*. We all have questions about our workplace:

1. **What is my *Role*?** Is it meaningful? Does it align with my personal purpose? Is it challenging enough? Will it allow me to make a useful contribution to something bigger? Will it utilize my strengths?
2. **What is my work *Environment* like?** Is it one that treats people with respect and dignity? Is it fun? Is it a meritocracy? Are my coworkers smart and capable? Do we have a common set of core beliefs? Are they (those beliefs) in line with my personal values?
3. **How will I *Develop and grow*?** Will I have opportunities to learn and develop? Will I be able to try out new things? Will I get coaching and feedback? Will my manager take a personal interest in my career?

While the emphasis that each person places on one versus another of these may differ, each bucket is always a factor in their level of energy and engagement to some degree. In the second chapter of the book, I introduce a method for leading your team that taps into the power of RED. I provide a checklist you can use to help identify people's expectations, and introduce a simple, time-efficient way to get to the bottom of every employee's needs. To lead effectively, you must understand the people you lead.

The third core principle is that as a leader, your job is not to directly produce results, it is to create the conditions that will galvanize the

energy of others to facilitate sustainable collective success. Chapters 3 to 6 show how to invigorate an entire enterprise or organization. Once you move beyond the level of leading a co-located team of direct reports to leading an entire department, division, company, or organization, you may be leading hundreds or thousands of people. At this level, you have more than two layers of hierarchy below you—i.e., you have several managers in your organization. I call this the “enterprise leadership level.” Now, it is impossible to directly supervise and motivate everyone. You simply cannot be everywhere at the same time. What, then, should you personally focus on in order to give your business the maximum advantage? What actions should you spend your time on and where should you delegate? I provide a powerful framework—*brains-bones-nerve*s—that will focus your time on the three most important levers for business success, which as a leader you must shape and control.

In chapter 7, I tell the stories of a few exceptional leaders and how each has followed these fundamental principles in achieving extraordinary success. A common theme runs through all of the stories: The leaders first found their own leadership energy by clarifying their personal purpose and values; then enlisted a few co-leaders on the journey; and finally galvanized the entire organization toward shared purpose and values by focusing on the most important leadership actions.

My research repeatedly confirmed that the main cause of sustained success of any organization is the proactive practice (by the senior leadership team) of the three core principles above. However, I also found that even the best of companies slip up from time to time. And this slipping is attributable to the same top management team that achieved the prolonged success. Further investigation into several companies that experienced such downturns revealed that in each case the failure was the result of leaders taking their eyes off the ball, becoming too comfortable in their role or about the strength of their organization’s culture, systems, and structures. In other words, when the leaders stopped applying the three principles in a proactive way,

their organizations ran into turbulence. Recent examples are major Wall Street firms that perhaps became complacent about their risk-management processes and systems; Toyota, a company revered over decades for its high quality standards, which found itself grappling with one of its biggest recalls in history; Coca-Cola—whose market leadership withered between the death of Roberto Goizueta and the arrival of Neville Isdell. I will tell some stories of such failure along the way in this book, because they have so much to say about how vital it is to be vigilant in applying the principles I outline.

While most of the stories in this book are based on true incidents, I have often changed names or created composites from multiple incidents.

My goal in this book is not to teach you leadership. Nobody can. But what I can do is give you a proven framework for defining and developing your own leadership agenda, and the tools to enable you to enlist the effective support of others toward realizing that agenda. Participants in my leadership seminars around the world have applied the methods I have developed to their businesses or nonprofit organizations and have experienced significant improvements in organizational performance. Some have commented that applying these tools yielded the highest return ever on time invested. I wrote this book in response to requests from many who desired a one-stop destination or leadership “tool kit” that would help them to further absorb the lessons and teach them to their staff. I hope that you find the methods as valuable as have the thousands of those I’ve seen benefit so substantially from them.