

JAMES M. KOUZES

BARRY Z. POSNER

LEADERSHIP
THE
CHALLENGE

Workbook



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The title is enclosed in a thick black rectangular frame. The word "THE" is written in white inside a small black circle, positioned between the words "LEADERSHIP" and "CHALLENGE".

Workbook



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Introduction

When we interviewed Don Bennett for our book, he said something that we've never forgotten. Don is the first amputee to climb Mt. Rainier. That's 14,410 feet on one leg and two crutches.

"How did you make it to the top?" we asked Don.

"One hop at a time," was his instant reply.

One hop at a time. One hop at a time. One hop at a time.

When you think about it, that's how most extraordinary things are accomplished. As much as you might desire it, you simply cannot leap to the top of a mountain. You can only get there by taking it one step at a time—or, as in Don's case, one hop at a time.

Yet we sometimes find ourselves simply paralyzed by the mere scale of the challenge. We are challenged to do more with less, adapt quickly to changing circumstances, innovate on the fly, deal with extreme uncertainty, and somehow still find time for our families and friends. Sometimes it's all just too overwhelming. But so is looking up to the top of that mountain when you are at the bottom. That's why Don would tell himself, as he looked just one foot ahead, "Anybody can hop from here to there." And so he did—fourteen thousand four hundred ten times.

But Don had something else in mind when he looked up at the top of that mountain. Despite what you might have heard about why people climb mountains, it's not because they're

there. When we asked Don to tell us why he wanted to be the first amputee to climb Mt. Rainier, he told us it was because he wanted to demonstrate to other disabled people that they were capable of doing more than they might have thought they could do. Don had aspirations that went beyond individual glory and success. He was the one doing the climbing, but he was not climbing just for himself. He was climbing for an entire community. He had a vision of others doing great things.

And there's another lesson we learned from Don that's directly applicable to leading others to get extraordinary things done. We asked him, "What's the most important lesson you learned from this climb?" Without hesitation, he said, "You can't do it alone."

We produced *The Leadership Challenge Workbook* so that you can apply to your projects the leadership lessons we have learned from Don Bennett—and from the thousands of other leaders we have studied. This is a practical guide that is designed to help you use The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®—the model of leadership derived from more than twenty years of research—as a tool for planning and preparing for your next climb to the summit.

The Leadership Challenge Workbook is a one-hop-at-a-time guide for leaders. It's a tool that asks you to reflect on each essential element of leading and to act in ways that incrementally create forward momentum. It asks you to think beyond your personal agenda and imagine how your leadership efforts engage others' desires. And because you can't do it alone, it also helps you involve others in the planning and the doing.

ARE YOU LEADING AT YOUR "PERSONAL BEST"?

When we began our research, we wanted to find out what practices characterize exemplary leadership, so we created a question that framed everything else. The question we asked everyone we studied was, "What do you do when you're operating at what you consider to be your 'personal best'?" We did not want to know what the most famous and the most senior leaders did. We wanted to know what leaders at *all* levels and in all contexts did.

We asked people to tell us a story about one project they led that they considered their Personal Best Leadership Experience—an experience that set their individual standard of excellence. We collected thousands of stories of leaders performing at their peak, and we looked for actions that were consistent across all the stories.

Many years—and several thousand quantitative and qualitative analyses later, we found that there are Five Practices that define exemplary leadership.

When operating at their best, leaders:

- Model the Way
- Inspire a Shared Vision
- Challenge the Process
- Enable Others to Act
- Encourage the Heart

You might already be familiar with The Five Practices from our book, *The Leadership Challenge*, which describes this research in detail. Or you might know The Five Practices because you have used our 360-degree assessment instrument, *Leadership Practices Inventory* (LPI) to further your development as a leader. In case the practices are new to you, we provide a brief overview in Chapter 2 of this workbook.

Whether you are familiar with our other work or not, we ask you to keep this in mind: When you engage in The Five Practices more frequently than you do at present, you *will* be more effective. We know from our research that those who Model, Inspire, Challenge, Enable, and Encourage more frequently are more likely to get extraordinary things done than those who do so less frequently. Exemplary leadership, in other words, is not an accident of birth or circumstance. It's a result of conscious and conscientious practice.

PROJECTS PROVIDE THE CONTEXT

Projects are how we tend to organize work these days. Projects create the context for our goals, determine with whom we work, and set our schedules. We will be more specific in Chapter 3 about what kind of project to select, but you might start thinking now about something you are currently leading or about to lead that could benefit from the application of exemplary practices.

One important point to keep in mind is that every new project you take on provides you with an opportunity. It's an opportunity to do things the same way you have always done them, or it's an opportunity for greatness—an opportunity to achieve another personal standard of excellence. It all depends on how you approach the challenge.

No world-class athlete ever set foot on the playing field saying to him- or herself, “Well, I think I’ll settle for performing at my average today.” The same is true of world-class leaders. Every day is an opportunity to improve performance, and the most challenging projects are the

ones that create the most opportunity. Your next project is your chance to create extraordinary results for your organization and to develop your leadership capabilities. This workbook is designed to help you plan and prepare so that you can lead at your personal best.

WHO SHOULD USE THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE WORKBOOK?

This workbook is designed for anyone in a leadership role. Its purpose is to help you further your abilities to lead others to get extraordinary things done. Whether you are in the private or public sector, an employee or a volunteer, a first-line supervisor or a senior executive, a student or a parent, you will find that this workbook applies to you. That's because leadership is not about being in a formal position. It's about action. You can grant someone the title of chief executive, but that does not make him or her a leader. Leadership is earned.

You get to be a leader in the eyes of others because of what you *do*. Leadership is about having the courage and spirit to move from whatever circumstances you are in to a place of making a difference in the world. This workbook is designed to help anyone who has the desire to lead and the will to make a difference. It's for anyone who is in a role that requires mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations.

LEADERSHIP IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

The next time you say to yourself, "Why don't they do something about that?" look in the mirror. Ask the person you see, "Why don't *you* do something about that?" By accepting the challenge to lead, you come to realize that the only limits are those you place on yourself.

While our research has taught us many things about the practice of leadership, our interaction with the thousands of individuals we have studied has taught us something more important. It's driven home the lesson that leadership is everyone's business. We need more leaders today, not fewer. We need more people to accept responsibility for bringing about significant changes in what we do and how we do it. We need more people to answer the call. The world is in great need of your talents.

We believe that you are capable of developing yourself as a leader far more than tradition or mythology has ever assumed possible. Simply imagine yourself standing at the base of Mt. Rainier, and then start climbing—one hop at a time.

We wish you great joy and success on your next leadership adventure. Onward and upward!

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner



Chapter 1

How to Use This Workbook

The best leaders are continually learning. They see all experiences as learning experiences. But there's a catch. Unexamined experiences don't produce the rich insights that come from reflection and analysis. If you want to become a better leader, you need to study your own performance and become more conscious about the choices that you are making and how you are acting on your intentions.

The purpose of *The Leadership Challenge Workbook* is to help you become a better leader by applying The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership to a project of your choice. As with the learning of any new discipline, we will ask you to do some exercises that isolate specific skills. This may seem a bit artificial at first, but it's no different from any form of practice—you are not actually in the game, but you know you are improving your capacity to play the game.

HOW THE WORKBOOK IS ORGANIZED

In Chapter 2 we've provided a summary of The Five Practices model that resulted from our twenty-plus years of research. If you've read *The Leadership Challenge* or have used the *Leadership Practices Inventory* you may not need to review the model, but it's here if you need a reminder. If you are not already familiar with The Five Practices, read this chapter carefully—it provides the foundation for the work that you will be doing.

Chapter 3 offers some guidelines for choosing the right leadership project. To enable you to focus your work, it's essential that you select a real project to serve as the target of your reflections, applications, and actions. In Chapters 4 through 8, you'll apply The Five Practices to that project. And in Chapter 9, which you'll complete after your project is finished (or well underway), you will find questions that help you reflect on the project's highs and lows and on what you learned—lessons you can then apply to your next personal best project.

As you progress through the activities, the Workbook supports your success in three ways:

1. *Reflection.* We want you to think about how you approach leadership. The questions we pose are designed to challenge your thinking and help you become more conscious about how well you engage in each of the Practices. Contrary to myths about leadership that assume you either have it or you do not, we know from our research that the very best leaders spend time examining what they have done and are planning to do. Call it the “mental game of leadership.” The exercises in this Workbook ask you to be more reflective about what your experience has taught you about leadership.
2. *Application.* We want you to apply the practices and commitments to your project. To do that, we provide exercises that help put The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership to work. In some cases you will do this application alone. In other cases, you will go out to talk to your team members and engage them in an activity.
3. *Implications.* As a result of your reflections and applications, you will learn about yourself, your team, your organization, and your project. At the end of each chapter, we ask you to jot down the implications of what you have learned about leadership.

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING THE WORKBOOK

It would be ideal if you could complete the entire Workbook as a way of getting everyone ready for the project—somewhat like a series of warm-up exercises before playing the game. On a practical level, that may not be possible. The way you use the Workbook depends on the nature of your project and your situation. Here are some suggestions:

- If you're just starting, we recommend that you begin with Chapter 4 on Model the Way and work your way through Chapter 8 on Encourage the Heart.