

**JAMES M.
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**BARRY Z.
POSNER**

Best-Selling Authors of **The Leadership Challenge**

ENCOURAGING THE HEART

IGNITING PURPOSE AND
PROVIDING MEANINGFUL RECOGNITION

SECOND EDITION

**The Leadership
Challenge**
A Wiley Brand 

Praise for *Encouraging the Heart*

“Jim and Barry’s book is a powerful reminder of the importance of heart, love, and courage in the workplace. Their ideas on improving the work experience and the relationship between manager and employee are accessible to everyone, regardless of their educational background. The authors have consistently emphasized these values in organizations worldwide, using compelling examples and stories of everyday leaders to illustrate their points. They remind us that we are all in this together, especially as the world changes and competition intensifies. This book is a must-read for anyone looking to enhance retention, engagement, and development in their organization. If you ever need a reminder of these essential principles, just turn to any chapter for inspiration.”

—**Dr. Beverly Kaye**

Co-author of *Love ’Em or Lose ’Em: Getting Good People to Stay, Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*, and
Up Is Not the Only Way: Rethinking Career Mobility

“When I first read *Encouraging the Heart* 20 years ago, it was a revelation. Here were respected leadership gurus Kouzes and Posner talking about so-called ‘soft skills’ in a way that showed them as a business necessity. For years, I would spot the book on executives’ shelves in my travels. It became a standard for leaders who ‘got it,’ those who grasped that success didn’t come from autocratic, demanding leadership but by lifting people up with courage and encouragement. The authors have now updated this classic for the modern day. The case studies and stories are fresh and fun to read. Most importantly, the second edition of *Encouraging the Heart* provides every leader with a wealth of practical tools to answer the most important of questions: *How do I do it?* In other words: *What are the steps I must take to encourage my people, get the best out of my team members, and help my team achieve greater success?* Bravo!”

—**Adrian Gostick**

New York Times bestselling author of *Leading with Gratitude*

“*Encouraging the Heart* is a transformative guide that touches the essence of leadership—caring for your people. James Kouzes and Barry Posner beautifully articulate the power of recognition and purpose in inspiring greatness in teams. Their approach is practical, evidence-based, and deeply human. As someone

who believes in leading with purpose, I can't emphasize enough how important this message is today. Leadership is not about titles or position—it's about connecting with others on a personal level and nurturing their potential. This book will not only ignite purpose within your organization, but it will also help you build a culture where people feel valued, motivated, and truly appreciated. In these pages, you'll discover that when leaders lead with heart, people will give their very best."

—Garry Ridge

Chairman Emeritus of WD-40 Company, and The Culture Coach

"In a time when fear runs high, the need for encouragement runs higher! Grounded in research but written with heart, this book will equip you to embolden the hearts of others to lead from courage, not fear—to step bravely forward in the moments that matter most. The world will be better for it."

—Dr. Margie Warrell

Leadership speaker and bestselling author of *The Courage Gap*

"Kouzes and Posner are the Lennon and McCartney of leadership. Always relevant, insightful, and enduring. Encouraging the Heart is another reminder from them that leadership is more than balance sheets and pivot tables. Leadership is about being human and they show us how to bring that blessing to the workplace."

—Richard A. Moran

author of *Never Say Whatever*

"In this book, authors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner are at their best—challenging the traditional thinking around recognition in the workplace. Through their research and the many stories shared, they shine a light on the dual nature of encouraging the heart, highlighting how it is both tough and tender. It is a practical and inspiring read for leaders at all levels!"

—Andrea Butcher

Founder of AE Consulting, and host of Being [at Work]

"This new edition of *Encouraging the Heart* arrives at a pivotal moment. As the most personal of The Leadership Challenge's Five Practices, it delves deep into what truly drives people to achieve: feeling valued and recognized. Jim and

Barry provide an invaluable toolkit for leaders seeking to uplift and inspire their teams, organizations, families, and communities by acknowledging those who uphold shared values and go above and beyond expectations. In a world that can often seem dark, this book is a call to be the light.”

—**Lori Armstrong**

DNP, RN NEA-BC, CEO and Chief Clinical Officer,
Inspire Nurse Leaders

“The bottom line is this: people thrive in environments where they find meaning, recognition, and purpose. When leaders provide those things, remarkable things happen! Kouzes’ and Posner’s latest is an exceptional handbook for anyone looking to improve their leadership and the lives of those in their span of care!”

—**Bob Chapman**

CEO of Barry-Wehmiller, author of *Everybody Matters:
The Extraordinary Power of Caring for Your People Like Family*

“I’ve been a fan of Kouzes and Posner’s work for many, many years and am especially excited about the publication of a new edition of *Encouraging the Heart: Igniting Purpose and Providing Meaningful Recognition*. Employee recognition is often referred to as the Greatest Management Principle in the World, and *Encouraging the Heart* provides a blueprint for how every leader can best harness the power of this proven principle to drive desired behavior and performance with their employees. It’s a delight to read and even more fun to apply! Thank you, Jim and Barry, for helping to show us the way!”

—**Bob Nelson PhD,**

President of Nelson Motivation Inc.,
creator of Worldwide Employee Appreciation Day,
and bestselling author of *1,501 Ways to Reward Employees*

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We dedicate this book to our community of Certified Masters, Partners, and Publishers who have encouraged our hearts for more than four decades. Thank you all for being a vital participant in our mission to increase the quality and quantity of leaders for the world.

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	1
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PART ONE

1 The Heart of Leadership	13
2 The Seven Essentials of Encouraging	27
3 The Leadership Encouragement Index	45

PART TWO

4 The First Essential: Set Clear Standards Aligned with Purpose	57
5 The Second Essential: Expect the Best	75
6 The Third Essential: Pay Attention	91
7 The Fourth Essential: Personalize Recognition	107

Contents

8 The Fifth Essential: Tell the Story	125
9 The Sixth Essential: Celebrate Together	143
10 The Seventh Essential: Set the Example	161
PART THREE	
11 Leadership Is an Affair of the Heart	181
12 101 Ways to Encourage the Heart	189
Notes	207
Acknowledgments	229
About the Authors	231
Index	235

INTRODUCTION

COURAGE. ENCOURAGE. Two words, same origin: heart.

To quote a classic Broadway musical refrain, “You’ve gotta have heart. All you really need is heart. . . Miles ’n miles n’ miles of heart.”¹

There’s no bravery or boldness without heart. There’s no spirit or support without heart. There’s no sacrifice or soul without heart. Nothing great ever gets done without heart. You’ve gotta have heart.

At the heart of leadership is caring. Without caring, leadership has no purpose. Without showing others that you care about them, they won’t care about you. Leadership is a relationship. It’s personal, and it’s interpersonal. In the most basic sense, it requires a connection between leaders and constituents over matters of the heart.

We need heart because the struggle to make extraordinary things happen is arduous. Our research tells us that if we’re going to make it to the summit, we *need* someone figuratively, if not literally, standing nearby and shouting, “Come on, you can do it. I know you can do it!”

That’s not something we readily admit; we often think we can do it alone. But we all really do need encouragement to do our best. Encouragement boosts performance, strengthens our resolve, and improves our

Introduction

health. Otherwise, why perform in front of an audience? Why not just sing in an empty room, play in an empty arena, or sell only to yourself? We need the applause. We need the enthusiasm and the energy from others. To do our best, we need to feel connected to others and, in turn, they to us. Greatness is never achieved alone.

Encouraging the Heart is about the leadership practice that connects us. It signals and documents that we're in "this" together—whatever the project, program, campaign, neighborhood, congregation, division, or endeavor. Social capital joins financial and intellectual capital as the necessary ingredients for organizational success. In creating social capital, leaders encourage the heart so that people will want to be with and for one another.

When leaders commend individuals for honoring the organization's values or achieving its goals, they foster courage, inspiring them to experience their ability to deliver—even when the pressure is on. When we recognize people for their contributions, we expand their awareness of their value to the organization and their coworkers, imparting a sense of social connectedness that all humans seek. While we may all be connected by being human, leaders make sure we're truly *in touch* with one another.

The world has changed since discovering, understanding, and appreciating the importance for leadership of *Encouraging the Heart* more than four decades ago and writing an earlier edition to enable others to engage more effectively in this vital leadership practice. Yet this essential leadership practice could not be timelier or more needed. Nothing on the horizon suggests, moreover, that its importance will diminish.

The Heart of The Matter

Encouraging the Heart discusses the principles and practices that support the basic human need to be appreciated for who we are and what we do. It's about how leaders can apply certain behaviors, principles,

Introduction

and practices to their daily work. This is not a book about glad-handing, backslapping, gold stars, and payoffs. It's about the importance of linking recognition, rewards, and appreciation to standards of excellence. It's about ensuring people know the significance of what they do, why it matters, and its purpose. It's about understanding why encouragement is essential to sustaining people's commitment to organizations and outcomes. It's about acknowledging that it requires hard work to make extraordinary things happen in organizations. It's about finding ways to enhance your ability in—and comfort with—recognizing and celebrating the achievements of others.

Encouraging the Heart originates in our research on the practices of people when they function at their *best as leaders*. Since our studies began more than four decades ago, we've collected thousands of personal-best leadership case studies and analyzed behavioral leadership data from more than five million respondents from around the globe across various individual, functional, and organizational demographics.² We've consistently found that when making extraordinary things happen, leaders:

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

All of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership® are essential. They all contribute to explaining why leaders are successful. Each plays a distinct part, and none alone is sufficient. We wrote a book, *The Leadership Challenge*, about all five practices and their impact on engagement and performance. So why have we written a book about only one practice, Encourage the Heart? There are four reasons.

The first is practicality. Over the last few decades, many books have been published about reward and recognition, but they have mostly

Introduction

focused more on techniques than on the underlying principles. We wanted to offer a set of behaviors, principles, practices, and examples to provide leaders with a repeatable process and essential actions they could apply in their own settings.

The second reason is principle. For too long now, we've heard the human side of business referred to as the "soft" side, and encouraging the heart seems about as soft as you can get. Some of our clients even told us the phrase *encourage the heart* wouldn't work in their organizations or cultures and asked if we could change the practice's name. We never have, and we never will. In this book, we will demonstrate that encouraging the heart is not soft; we will also show how powerful a force it is in achieving high standards and stretch goals. If you're after results, then you'd better start paying attention to encouraging the heart.

Third, our work is evidence-based. We've researched leadership for more than forty years and gathered data from millions of leaders and their constituents about The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership.³ When we write about leadership and what leaders should do to make extraordinary things happen, we are not simply making assertions based on opinion. We can support what we say with data. We wanted to ensure that in the most recent years—characterized by many challenges, conflicts, and division—the practice of Encourage the Heart remained valid and impactful. You'll find that data in the chapters of this book.

The final reason we chose to write *Encouraging the Heart* is because we wanted to add our voices to the discussion of soul and spirit in the workplace. Leaders create relationships, and one of these relationships is between individuals and their work. Ultimately, we all work for a purpose, and that common purpose must be served when encouraging individuals and groups. Encouraging the heart only works when there's a good fit between the person, the work, and the organization.

To this final point, it is interesting to note that the word *encouragement* has its root in the Latin word *cor*, which literally means "heart."⁴ So does the word *courage*. To have courage means to have heart. To *encourage*—to provide with or give courage—means to give others heart.

Richard I, king of England from 1189 to 1199, was glorified for his courage. What did the troubadours call him? Richard the Lionheart.

The heroic tradition from which this language comes tells us that when discussing courage and encouragement, we don't simply mean the sentimental notion expressed on contemporary greeting cards. Rather, in this context, the word *heart* brings forth images of courage when faced with significant challenges, hope when confronted with tremendous difficulties, and the fortitude to reach inside and give your best even when faced with overwhelming odds. Heart involves strength and toughness. It involves leaders' awareness of their responsibilities to those they're entrusted to lead and the values of the organizations that select them. It involves forcefully imparting cherished values to those who look to them for leadership.

But heart, *cor*, has a double meaning. From its root also comes the word "cordial." Encouragement is about being generous and charitable.⁵ It's about having a "big heart." When leaders encourage their constituents' hearts, they also show how profoundly grateful they are for the dedication and commitment others have shown to the cause.

Encouraging the heart, then, is about the dichotomous nature of leadership. It's about toughness and tenderness, guts and grace, firmness and fairness, fortitude and gratitude, passion and compassion. Leaders must have courage themselves, and they must impart it to others. This book is about how leaders effectively give of their hearts so that others may more fully develop and experience their own.

Who Should Read this Book?

As with our other books *The Leadership Challenge*, *Credibility*, *Everyday People*, *Extraordinary Leadership*, and *The Truth About Leadership*, this one is written to assist people in furthering their abilities to lead others in making extraordinary things happen. Whether you're in the public or private sector, whether you're an employee or volunteer, whether

Introduction

you're on the front lines or in the senior ranks, whether you're a student, a teacher, or a parent, we've written this book to help you develop your capacity to guide others to places they've never been before.

In this book, you'll find numerous examples of how ordinary people exercise leadership. What you don't find here are many examples of famous executives and celebrity leaders. It's not that they couldn't benefit from *Encouraging the Heart* or that they don't have wisdom to impart; it's just that they represent such a small percentage of the people who lead that they don't, and shouldn't, dominate our view of what leadership is and what leaders do. Most likely, you don't know or haven't heard about the people we report on in this book, but we're confident you know people like them in your workplace.

To us, *leadership is everyone's business*. Leadership is not about a position or a place. It's an attitude of experiencing a sense of responsibility for making a difference. Even if you don't consider yourself to be in a leadership role now, you may find yourself in one soon. *Encouraging the Heart* can be helpful to you as you prepare for that eventuality. In our studies of people functioning at their personal-best as leaders, we've written about people as young as nine and older than eighty who have assumed leadership roles. So don't count yourself out.

It's been our experience that leaders most often want answers to questions that begin with *How do I . . . ?* So we offer many how-to's in this book. We also intend to go beyond providing a prescriptive list of things to do. We want to offer you a set of principles that guide you in developing your own methods and techniques. That's where most of the fun is, anyway.

A Leader's Guide

Encouraging the Heart is designed to describe how leaders behave, explain the principles underlying their actions, provide many examples of leaders demonstrating these leadership practices, and offer suggestions on how to start being more encouraging. We've subtitled this book

Introduction

Igniting Purpose and Providing Meaningful Recognition because we also make the point that genuine encouragement of individuals engaged in making extraordinary things happen needs to be linked to something greater than themselves—something that goes beyond extrinsic rewards and engages with intrinsic values.

The first three chapters introduce you to the basic message about encouraging the heart: the best leaders care. In Chapter 1, we present research to support this point of view, and in Chapter 2, we offer two case studies as illustrations of the seven essentials of encouraging the heart. Once you master these, you're on your way to becoming a caring and credible leader. Chapter 3 provides The Encouragement Index, an opportunity to self-assess the extent to which you believe you currently exhibit each of the essentials.

Chapters 4 through 10 explore the seven essentials in some detail. Although the discussions are built on our original and ongoing research, we expand this understanding of encouragement by drawing on the research of other scholars. Each essential is documented with numerous leadership examples.

Chapter 4 explains why encouraging the heart begins by being clear about standards aligned with purpose. Unless leaders and organizations articulate clear values and principles, it's hit-or-miss for colleagues when it comes to knowing the right things to do and why. It's also tough for leaders to know how to recognize performance when they don't know what to look for. Chapter 5 is about the leader's attitude toward others. Expecting the best is the only way we get the best, and this chapter tells us why and how "Pygmalion leaders" are the most effective.

When successful leaders expect the best, they're much more able to pay attention to what's happening around them and find examples of people living up to and exceeding expectations. As Chapter 6 shows, leaders always look for exemplars of values and standards. In Chapter 7, we learn the power of personalizing recognition. The best leaders get to know the recipient so that when it comes time to recognize, leaders understand how to make it special, meaningful, and memorable. Personalizing recognition is also how leaders communicate that they see and hear others.

In Chapter 8, we explain how great leaders are also great storytellers. Storytelling is one of humankind's oldest ways to communicate life's lessons and is an essential medium to broadcast and publicize stories of recognition. People learn best from those they can most relate to, so leaders use all available media to brag about people in their organizations who are living the values and performing at the highest levels. In Chapter 9, we show how leaders bring people together to share their colleagues' successes and provide the necessary support for one another. Social support is essential and indispensable to our well-being and productivity. Encouraging the heart is not about singling out superstars; instead, it's more about creating a sense of community in which everyone can contribute.

We conclude our discussion of the seven essentials by reiterating one of our consistent messages: leaders must do what they expect others to do. Chapter 10 is about how leaders must be credible, set an example, and create an environment for encouraging the heart. We summarize it all in Chapter 11 and note the importance of authenticity in what you say and do. In Chapter 12, we offer more than 101 ways to get started in your quest to encourage the hearts of your constituents.

In reading and applying the material in these chapters, we hope you'll realize that encouraging the heart is much more than being nice to people or acting like a stereotypical cheerleader. Encouraging the heart means employing a set of behaviors, principles, and practices that, taken together, add up to a powerful force in mobilizing people.

Keeping Hope Alive

We're living in a time of great promise. New developments in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology promise that some of the deadliest and most disabling diseases may be cured or at least better managed. New information technologies promise not only to connect us globally and create new forms of commerce but also to stimulate creativity, increase the speed of innovation, enhance productivity, enrich human experiences, expand information accessibility, and extend the reach of our educational systems.

Introduction

At the same time, we're suffering from a severe hangover resulting from the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. Across the globe, many aspects of "normal" life have been upended. International tensions, including conflicts in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Africa, are making fewer of us feel as personally safe as we once did. Random acts of violence, mass shootings, and political incivility seem to be a regular part of the nightly news. Wildfires, heat domes, melting ice caps, and powerful tropical storms cause many of us to wonder when we're really going to hit bottom and if our lives will ever be the same again.

In today's fast-paced, seemingly nonstop, virtual, and visual world, getting caught up in the craziness can be easy. Slowing down and taking the time to encourage the heart is a major challenge. And yet, when matters are hectic and workloads are heaviest, people need to hear that they are appreciated for all their hard work and dedication.

But there can't be great promise without great hope. Bold leadership is required to keep hope alive, and *Encouraging the Heart* is ultimately about keeping hope alive. Leaders keep hope alive when they set high standards and genuinely express optimism about an individual's capacity to achieve them. They keep hope alive when they give feedback and publicly recognize a well-done job. They keep hope alive when they give their constituents the internal support that all human beings need to feel that they and their work are important and have meaning. They keep hope alive when they train and coach people to exceed their current capacities. Most importantly, leaders keep hope alive when they set an example. Nothing is more encouraging than seeing leaders practice what they preach.

These are tough times for many people. There's some apprehensiveness in our actions, a cynicism in our attitudes, and a creeping weariness in our bodies. The path to the future has always been full of challenges and opportunities, yet deep down, you and I know we'll get through these times—with courage and encouragement.

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PART ONE

