

FOREWORD BY RONALD A. HEIFETZ

# BUSINESS

# LEADERSHIP

A JOSSEY-BASS READER

SECOND EDITION



JOAN V. GALLOS, EDITOR

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# **Business Leadership**



Joan V. Gallos

Editor

Foreword by Ronald A. Heifetz

— Business Leadership

A Jossey-Bass Reader  
(Second Edition)



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*For Christopher John Gallos Bolman and Bradley  
Garrison Bolman—Reach high, my sons, for stars lie  
hidden in your souls*



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## — Foreword

The demands of change have always challenged collective enterprise. People have faced new pressures and opportunities from the beginning of time, and many of our current ways of doing business are practices that have evolved in response to the adaptive challenges of their day. With change a constant in today's global business environment, adaptability remains critical for sustained success.

For nearly four million years our early ancestors lived in small bands that foraged for food. They developed ever increasing sophistication in the design of tools and strategies for hunting and movement; and their physical capacities grew through evolutionary change. About twelve thousand years ago people learned to domesticate plants and animals, and new abilities to store food allowed and required sustained settlements. Large numbers of people living together brought new needs for governing organizations and communities. These in turn were met by drawing on the small-group authority relationships that had worked so well before, now amended for greater complexity to fit the differing contexts of military command, civil governance, and commercial organizations.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on what anthropologists have identified as a capacity to internalize *the wisdom of elders*, our ancestors went on to form cultures with self-sustaining norms that required minimal reinforcement by authorities.<sup>2</sup>

This process of adaptation to new possibilities and challenges has continued over the course of written history, with growth and variation in the scope, structure, governance, strategy, and coordination of political and commercial enterprises. So has the evolution of our understandings of leadership.

Leadership is the process of mobilizing progress—fostering people's adaptive capacities to tackle tough problems and thrive.<sup>3</sup> The concept of *thriving* is drawn from evolutionary biology, in which a successful adaptation accomplishes three tasks. It preserves the accumulated wisdom of essential DNA; discards DNA that no longer

serves current needs; and innovates to develop the organism's capacities to flourish in new ways and in more challenging environments.<sup>4</sup> Successful adaptations enable a living system to take the best from its history into the future. They are both conservative *and* progressive.

When we anchor the concept of leadership in the work of progress—in resolving contradictions within our cultural DNA or between our cultural DNA and the demands of our environment—we come to view authority and power as tools, rather than as ends in themselves. Neither authority nor power defines leadership, although both are central to its practice—and can, if misused, become significant constraints. Too many individuals in positions of power today do not exercise much leadership, and we need to understand more deeply how acquiring authority limits, not just enables, good leadership.

This volume reflects decades of work by multiple individuals to identify common principles of success and the leadership that helps to generate it. Looking through various lenses we have come to understand the workings of organizational adaptation in different ways, yet all appreciate how businesses and communities can thrive in new and challenging contexts. In my work across sectors and around the world, for example, I find that the logic of biological adaptation drawn from Darwin's theory of evolution provides insights into organizational and cultural adaptation. And I want to use six ideas as a suggestive set of properties to frame this wonderful collection of chapters. Let me begin with the links between leadership and change.

Leadership is about change, but not just any change. Many regressive and destructive actions generate change, but we would not consider them acts of leadership. Take, for example, the assassinations of Lincoln, Kennedy, King, Sadat, and Rabin. Or look at the daily murders and muggings that profoundly change lives in communities around the world. These are society's miscarriages. The change that we intuitively associate with leadership is enabling. Changing environments and new dreams demand new strategies and capacities and the leadership to mobilize them. As in evolution these new combinations and variations allow organizations to thrive under challenging circumstances rather than perish, regress, or contract. Our concepts of leadership, then, must wrestle with normative questions of value, purpose, and process. What does *thriving* mean for businesses operating in any particular context?

In biology, thriving means propagating. But in business, mission, objectives, and method are more complex. Thriving thus becomes

a mix that includes short- and long-term shareholder value, quality of service, employee morale, and social and environmental impact. Adaptive success in a cultural rather than a Darwinian biological sense therefore requires business leadership that can orchestrate conflicting priorities among legitimate stakeholders in order to clarify the stakes. Moreover, priorities do not remain stable: they change as circumstances and contexts do. From this perspective, leadership operates within a dynamic tension where essential priorities and bottom lines are less clear than many initially imagine them to be.

Second, leadership is only partly about change. Most successful changes build on the past. They are rarely the result of a zero-based, ahistorical, start-over stance, except perhaps as a deliberate exercise in strategic rethinking. Most radical revolutions fail, and those that do succeed have more rather than less in common with the heritage that preceded them. The American Revolution, for example, created a political system and culture with deep roots in British and European cultures, systems, and thinking. In biological evolution most core processes are conserved, and although the DNA that changes may radically expand capacity, the actual amount of DNA that changes is very small. More than 98 percent of our current DNA, for example, is the same as that of a chimpanzee: it took less than a 2 percent DNA change to give humans dramatically greater capacity. The challenge for leadership, then, is to mobilize people to distinguish that which is essential from that which is expendable in their heritage and to innovate in ways that make efficient use of previous wisdom and know-how. Successful adaptations are always more conservative than progressive. Leadership consists of anchoring change in values, competencies, and strategic orientations that will endure.<sup>5</sup>

Third, innovation is an experimental activity, with more failure than success along the way. Evolutionary adaptation and “learning” accumulate and consolidate these successes over time. Sexual reproduction rapidly produces diversity, along with higher failure rates. As many as one-third of all pregnancies spontaneously abort, usually within the first weeks of conception, because the embryo’s genetic variation is too radical to support life—too much critical DNA is missing. Similarly in business, Pfizer, for example, knows it must be willing to lose one billion dollars to find the next blockbuster cardiovascular drug. In such an environment, leadership needs an experimental mind-set to meet the adaptive pressures and opportunities of the marketplace. It must learn quickly from its actions and respond

accordingly, rather than rely heavily on traditional planning and top-down decision making. In nature the tension between efficiency and creativity balances itself out. In the world of business those who lead may never find a perfect balance. They must learn to operate comfortably within the dynamic tension between efficiency and creativity and improvise as they go, buying time and resources along the way for the next sets of experiments and lessons to be generated.

Fourth, evolution is about diversity. It operates like a fund manager, diversifying nature's risk. Each example of conception is a variant—an experiment—with capacities somewhat different from the norm. By diversifying the gene pool, nature markedly increases the odds that some member of the population will have the capacity to survive in a changing ecosystem. In contrast, cloning, the original mode of reproduction, is extraordinarily efficient in generating high rates of propagation. It has, however, limited degrees of variation and is therefore far less likely to generate innovations for thriving in new environments.

As we can see, evolution does not operate by central planning. Its secret is variation, which in organizational terms could be called distributed intelligence.<sup>6</sup> No one could have predicted, for example, who would invent Post-it notes, but someone did. A key to effective leadership, then, is the know-how to shape a culture that values diverse views and rewards the practice of leadership with and without authority. If organizations rely on the genius of the few at the top, the odds of adaptive success go down. This is especially true for global businesses operating in many local microenvironments. All organizations need distributed leadership: people willing to initiate reflection and action, often against the grain and beyond their job description and formal authority, in order to develop the next relevant experiment and opportunity for growth.

Fifth, evolutionary adaptation significantly displaces and rearranges DNA. Similarly, cultural adaptation generates loss. Learning is often painful. One person's innovation can cause another person to feel incompetent, betrayed, or irrelevant. Not many people like to be displaced or rearranged. As students of leadership and change have long explored, adaptive pressures often generate a defensive reaction among people as they try to ameliorate the disruptions associated with their losses.<sup>7</sup> Leadership requires the diagnostic abilities to recognize those losses and the predictable defensive patterns of response that operate at the individual and systemic level. It also requires knowing how to counteract them.



Sixth, adaptive processes take time. Sometimes biological adaptations are quick, like bacterial resistance to penicillin. But generally, adaptations that generate significantly expanded capacities take thousands, or millions, of years. Intuitively, we know that experiments take time to show results. Although organizational and cultural adaptations seem lightning fast compared to most biological adaptive processes, they also need time in which people can consolidate new sets of norms and operations. Leadership requires persistence—and those who lead need to stay in the game, even while taking the heat along the way. Consider, for example, the story of Moses.

At the outset Moses thought that the two hardest parts of his job were persuading the Israelites to trust him and persuading Pharaoh to let his people go. After completing those jobs, getting to the Promised Land seemed pretty straightforward. After all, trade routes across the Sinai were well known and had been used for more than thirty thousand years. Moses did indeed accomplish his two initial goals, and within about eighteen months. But when he sent scouts to investigate the way ahead, they returned with reports not only of a fruitful land but also of cities with soldiers that looked like “giants.” Hearing these reports the Israelites demanded that they return to Egypt, where they would be secure, even if that meant returning to slavery. Moses responded by falling on his face in despair. Getting to the Promised Land, he discovered, was an adaptive challenge beyond any expert solution he or a divine power could provide. The problem lay in the hearts, minds, and spirits of the people, as did the solution. Their cultural DNA had to change: they had to develop from a people enculturated to slavery into a self-governing society. Without that change, no solution could be found. When the people are the problem, the solution lies in them; and the reality is that people take time to learn new ways. Moses spent another thirty-eight years on the job—and even then, as we know, the job was not fully finished.<sup>8</sup>

My colleagues in this volume would all agree that leadership is essential for businesses of all kinds to tackle their tough challenges, innovate in order to thrive, and replace current structures and processes that no longer suffice. Mobilizing people to meet these tasks is at the heart of leadership. These efforts, over time, build an organization’s adaptive capacity, enabling it to meet the ongoing stream of adaptive challenges posed by a world ever ready to offer new realities, opportunities, and pressures.

The authors in this volume draw on their study, teaching, and practice of leadership to identify common principles and contingencies

that can guide practitioners toward leadership success. Our efforts here join a discussion on organizing and leading that goes back to the beginnings of written history—and oral traditions long before that. We stand on countless shoulders in undertaking this work to better understand adaptability and the leadership that generates it, and there is yet more work to be done in pushing the boundaries of our knowledge. I hope you enjoy this excellent volume and see it as an invitation to join us in exploring the frontiers of the leadership terrain.

November 2007

*Ronald A. Heifetz*  
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

## — Introduction and Acknowledgments

The call for leadership is strong: everyone seems to want more. A quick look at the front page of the daily newspaper confirms our collective yearning for leadership across sectors, institutions, and borders—more leaders, better leaders—to resolve the dilemmas and complexities of modern life. The assumption is that good leaders make a difference and that we are better off because of them. Test that yourself. Ask those around you: do we need more leadership around here? *Absolutely* is the likely reply.

Ask the same people *What is leadership?* and listen to their halting responses. I have asked this question of many would-be leaders. They are often surprised by their own inability to answer easily or confidently—and neither age, experience, nor career stage makes answering easier. Some are amused by the irony that they are investing their time, energy, and resources to learn how to do something that they cannot even define.

For some, leadership is synonymous with very good management. For others, it centers on persuasive abilities. Some see leadership as fostering a world of future possibilities, others as generating current business processes and decisions. Some understand leadership as a social phenomenon, whereas others are quick to equate it with a single heroic figure. Leadership is complex. All that we know confirms that. But if we do not understand at a basic level what leadership is (and is not), how can we prepare ourselves to lead well? And equally important, how will we know if we are leading effectively?

This volume explores the fundamentals of business leadership: what it is, how to do it, and what maximizes its success. Leadership is a social process, rooted in the values, behaviors, skills, knowledge, and

ways of thinking of both leaders and followers. It is multidimensional in skill and orientation, and successful leaders need to understand people and organizations, tasks and processes, current context and past history, self and others. They need to attend to current realities while envisioning future possibilities. To do all this well, leaders need confidence and strategies for working competently across a wide range of diverse issues—from fostering the organizational clarity that comes from sound structures and policies to unleashing energy and creativity through bold visions, from creating learning organizations where workers mature and develop as everyday leaders to managing the conflict inevitable in a world of enduring differences. Leaders use mind, heart, and spirit in their work and require a helpful map to guide and direct their shuttling among multiple levels, processes, issues, and domains.

This volume was designed to help leaders develop and deepen their own map. It is intended to be a resource for both experienced business leaders and those aspiring to the role. Newcomers can read cover to cover and explore leadership's scope, purpose, methods, and possibilities. They will find everything they need to get started and grow in their leadership. Organizations need leadership at every level, and these chapters offer support for those with or without formal leadership positions at work. Experienced leaders will appreciate chapters that capture the best thinking on a range of topics—the complex nature of the work, essential skills and ways to enhance them, models for understanding the organizational terrain, ways to anticipate challenges and avoid pitfalls, and strategies to sustain oneself as a leader.

This book is intentionally inclusive in content—exploring the linkages among individual, organizational, and situational factors that contribute to leadership success. It celebrates the expanded understanding of leadership and leadership development that has evolved in response to the changing nature of organizations today, the global business environment, and advances in management theory. Leadership is a central force in the creation of healthy and effective organizations in an increasingly competitive and complex world. Taken together the chapters in this volume remind readers that leadership is more than tools and techniques. It is a values-based process that engages people in useful and significant ways to search for lasting solutions to today's—and tomorrow's—challenges.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

In deciding what to include in this volume, I have kept one question in mind: what are the tools and insights that will help business leaders succeed as they set out to improve their organization's health and effectiveness? In everyday language, how can they make a real difference through their daily work? All the classic leadership ideas and strategies that help us answer that question are represented and updated in this volume. But readers will also find new contributions, created explicitly for this book, that expand our understandings in key areas and that stretch the ways we think about leadership and ourselves as leaders. There is little sense in producing a new book that tells the same old story.

This volume is divided into five parts. Each part is introduced by an *Editor's Interlude* that frames the issues to be examined, describes the rationale for the material included, and introduces each of the chapters in the section. As a whole this book flows from theory to practice: it begins with a set of ideas on how to understand the leadership process and moves to practical suggestions for ways to lead effectively and to sustain the efforts.

More specifically, Part One, "Framing the Issues: What Is Leadership?" explores the fundamental nature and elements of leadership. The chapters in this section offer opportunities to think systematically about leadership basics, applications, and competencies for success. The chapter authors distinguish leadership from other forms of influence, like authority, power, and dominance; identify necessary skills; and correct common myths about leading. The ability to lead well is clearly linked to one's capacity to decompose and demystify the process.

Part Two, "Becoming a Leader, Preparing for the Opportunities," examines the ongoing nature of leadership development and provides strategies and insights to prepare leaders for the opportunities ahead. Learning to lead well involves persistence, humility, and personal clarity. The authors in this section offer fundamental ways to accelerate the learning process.

The chapters in Part Three, "Understanding the Territory, Anticipating the Challenges," address essential ways to understand organizations and the larger context for leadership. Leadership is always contextual, and organizations in today's fast-paced, global world require leaders at all levels who understand the organizational lay of

the land and how best to match their efforts and talents to the unique demands of each situation.

Part Four, “Making It Happen,” contains the largest set of chapters in this volume. It begins with the basics of establishing credible footing as a leader and tackling the fundamentals of mission, vision, and strategy. It then provides sound advice for staying on track and identifying predictable forces that can derail leaders and their initiatives. Effective leadership can never be reduced to a simple checklist, but we can identify the basic tasks and issues that all leaders need to address and resolve.

Part Five, “Sustaining the Leader,” explores ways for leaders to support themselves in order to sustain their leadership efforts. Strength of character and resolve matter. But so do strategies for surviving the inevitable attacks of angry opponents; for nourishing the soul; for building personal resilience; and for staying healthy, grounded, and hopeful.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are multiple people to thank, and it is hard to know where to begin. Many have contributed in different ways to this project. Let me start by thanking all the authors whose work is represented in this volume. They are the best thinkers on leadership today, and we all benefit from their wisdom and contributions. I trace the beginnings of my own interests in leadership to the seminal ideas of Warren Bennis, James MacGregor Burns, Edgar Schein, Lee Bolman, and Terrence Deal, and I feel honored to share their work with the readers of this volume.

Strong thanks goes next to Ronald Heifetz. His Foreword to this volume is a rich and provocative perspective on leadership and its role in facilitating adaptive change: a special gift from someone whose work reminds us that there are no easy answers to the question of how to lead well. Ron and I go back to my graduate school days, and I am pleased by this opportunity for us to work together again.

Special appreciation to Karen Ayas, Andre Delbecq, Loizos Heracleous, Claus Jacobs, Phil Mirvis, and Michael Sales who found time in their busy lives to write original chapters for this volume—some with short turnaround times—when I realized that their particular perspectives needed to be represented here.

The size of this volume should be some indication of all that it took to get this work to press. Kathe Sweeney, senior editor in the Business & Management and Public Administration Divisions at

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Leadership is a lot easier to study than to provide, and I have special people to thank for that important lesson. University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) chancellor emerita Eleanor Brantley Schwartz and former vice chancellor for academic affairs Marvin Query enabled my return to university administration after a long hiatus; and former interim chancellor and president of the University of Missouri system Gordon Lamb and former provost Marjorie Smelstor provided other opportunities to serve, including appointments as special assistant to Gordon at UMKC and then as dean of the School of Education. Although filling many of these positions seemed akin to drinking water from a fire hose, the learning was invaluable—and I am a better person and professional because of it. I also appreciated the trust, support, and leadership lessons from these consummate professionals, whom I am honored today to call good friends.

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November 2007

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## — About the Editor

Joan V. Gallos is professor of leadership at the Henry W. Bloch School of Business and Public Administration at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where she has also served as professor and dean of education, coordinator of university accreditation, special assistant to the chancellor for strategic planning, and director of the higher education graduate programs. Gallos holds a bachelor's degree cum laude in English from Princeton University, and master's and doctoral degrees from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She has served as a Salzburg Seminar Fellow; as president of the Organizational Behavior Teaching Society; as editor of the *Journal of Management Education*; as a member of numerous editorial boards, including as a founding member of the *Academy of Management Learning and Education* journal; and as a member of regional and national advisory boards for such groups as the Organizational Behavior Teaching Society, the Forum for Early Childhood Organization and Leadership Development, the Kauffman and Danforth Foundations' Missouri Superintendents Leadership Forum, and the Mayor's Kansas City Collaborative for Academic Excellence. She has also served on the national steering committee for the New Models of Management Education project (a joint effort of the Graduate Management Admissions Council and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business); on the W. K. Kellogg Foundation College Age Youth Leadership Review Team; on the University of Missouri President's Advisory Council on Academic Leadership; and on civic, foundation, and nonprofit boards in greater Kansas City. Gallos has taught at the Radcliffe Seminars, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the University of Massachusetts-Boston, and Babson College, as well as in executive programs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the University of Missouri, Babson College, and the University of British Columbia. She has published on professional effectiveness, gender, and leadership

education and is editor of *Organization Development: A Jossey-Bass Reader* (2006), coauthor of the books *Teaching Diversity: Listening to the Soul*, *Speaking from the Heart* (with V. Jean Ramsey and associates, Jossey-Bass, 1997) and *Reframing Academic Leadership* (with Lee G. Bolman, Jossey-Bass, forthcoming), and creator of a wide variety of published management education teaching materials. She received the Fritz Roethlisberger Memorial Award for the best article on management education in 1990 and was finalist for the same prize in 1994. In 1993, Gallos accepted the Radcliffe College Excellence in Teaching Award. In 2002 and 2003, she served as founding director of the Truman Center for the Healing Arts, based in Kansas City's public hospital, which received the 2004 Kansas City Business Committee for the Arts Partnership Award as the best partnership between a large organization and the arts.

# Framing the Issues: What Is Leadership?

The chapters in Part One offer answers to the basic question, *What is leadership?* They remind us that leadership is a complex social process, rooted in the values, skills, knowledge, and ways of thinking of both leaders and followers. Leadership always involves adaptive change, as Ronald Heifetz notes in the Foreword to this volume, and we think too simply when we equate leadership with the search for a simple answer to a current problem. Leaders help us understand our current reality and forge a brighter future from it. They see new opportunities, and manage a complex interactive process that supports individual and collective growth. In the process of this work, leaders face critical choices based on their reading of the circumstances, the individuals involved, and the possibilities that they see. And although there is widespread agreement that leadership is important and that effective leadership is vital, there is less clarity about what that really means or how that translates into effective action.

The word *leadership* has become an incantation, cautions John Gardner (1993), and its meaning has risen above common workplace usage. “There seems to be a feeling that if we invoke it often enough with sufficient ardor we can ease our sense of having lost our way,

our sense of things unaccomplished, of duties unfulfilled” (p. 1). This kind of thinking clouds our perspectives toward everyday leaders and leadership—and makes it hard to understand how ordinary people can successfully wear the mantle. It also keeps us from looking below the surface—beyond leadership’s aura—so that we fail to fully appreciate what leadership is and how it works.

The chapters in this section decompose leadership. They distinguish leadership from other forms of influence, like power, authority, and dominance; identify essential elements and skills; and correct common myths about leading. Together they offer the basis for a grounded framework and help us see that success requires

- A simple, not simplistic, definition of the leadership process
- Insight into one’s purpose for leading
- Understanding of the organizational context in which one leads
- Appreciation for the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in each situation
- Clarity about what one brings to the leadership table

Savvy leaders develop their own conceptual framework about all this, a repertoire of skills to call upon, capacities for self-reflection and learning from experience, and a healthy respect for the difficulties and risks. The authors in this section provide rich opportunities to think more systematically about leadership basics, applications, and competencies for success.

Part One begins with a classic article from the *Harvard Business Review* by John P. Kotter, “What Leaders Really Do.” This chapter explores the seminal distinction between leadership and management, identifying the two as complementary functions that contribute significantly and in their own ways to organizational effectiveness. Managers, says Kotter, bring order from chaos through planning, organizing, and controlling. Leaders, in contrast, help organizations cope with change and opportunity by focusing on vision, network building, and the relationships needed for a strong organizational future.

Good leadership is emotionally compelling. Effective leaders inspire and motivate, and those who know how to bring out the best in themselves and others help their organizations to thrive and grow. In fact, say Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie