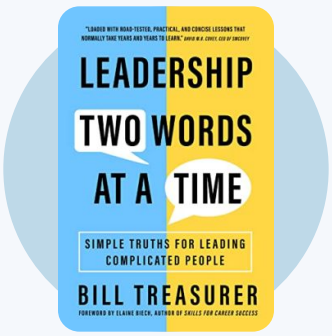


BOOK

Leadership Two Words at a Time

Simple Truths for Leading Complicated People

Bill Treasurer | Berrett-Koehler © 2022 | 256 pages

Buy the book

getAbstract Rating

★ 9 | Engaging | Comprehensive | Applicable

What You Will Learn

- How to distill leadership lessons into two-word phrases.
- Why self-discovery is crucial for effective leadership.
- How to balance responsibility with self-care.
- Why humility and trust are vital in leadership roles.

Supported Skills

Manage Stress | Lead Yourself | Live Well | Understand Yourself

About the Author

Bill Treasurer, CEO (Chief Encouragement Officer) at Giant Leap Consulting, also wrote *Leaders Open Doors: A Radically Simple Leadership Approach to Lift People, Profits, and Performance; Right Risk: 10 Powerful Principles for Taking Giant Leaps with Your Life;* and *A Leadership Kick in the Ass: How to Learn from Rough Landings, Blunders, and Missteps.* He and John R. Havlik co-authored *The Leadership Killer: Reclaiming Humility in an Age of Arrogance.*

Recommendation

Stepping into your first leadership position can feel overwhelming and intimidating. You'll welcome good advice when you suddenly face multiple responsibilities and a steep learning curve. That's why Bill Treasurer's excellent book should be mandatory reading for new leaders – and it's a good refresher for any leader. The author uses two-word phrases to highlight key leadership concepts – such as "cultivate composure," "trust first" and "practice humility" – and shares solid advice gained from decades of rich leadership experience. Treasurer doesn't waste time with fancy language and theories; he offers suggestions to help new leaders learn and grow. They'll want to keep his manual within reach.

Take-Aways

- New leaders need a steady, experienced hand for the bumpy journey ahead.
- Remember leadership lessons in clear two-word phrases.
- Self-discovery is a prerequisite for effective leadership.
- Be a role model for the people you lead.
- Harsh reality sets in when the excitement of being a new leader wanes.
- Take care of yourself and show some self-respect.
- Beware of leadership's creeping, seductive power.
- Threat and intimidation rule when trust is absent.

Summary

New leaders need a steady, experienced hand for the bumpy journey ahead.

Leadership is an onerous responsibility even for veterans, not to mention newly promoted leaders or young people stepping into managerial roles for the first time. Today's political, economic and social issues complicate already demanding leadership positions.

The post-pandemic legion of remote workers continues to expand, offering more challenges for leaders who want to bring new employees on board, provide personalized feedback and build

esprit de corps. Roughly 80% of organizations believe in prioritizing leadership development, according to Development Dimensions Inc.'s global leadership forecast, but only 5% have development plans ready to implement.

> *"New leaders aren't trying to go from good to great, they're just trying to survive till the end of the week."*

You typically earn a promotion to management due to your stellar track record in staff positions, but that record doesn't automatically qualify you to lead. You may have to figure out your new position with minimal corporate support. You're responsible for how other people perform, and you'll have to contend with various personalities. Some people may appreciate your style and approach; others may not. In addition, your bosses will monitor you closely. New leaders often find their jobs overwhelming. Don't complicate your situation by thinking and planning obsessively and doing too much yourself. Find the proper balance between being too nice or too bossy and between delegating or doing things yourself.

Remember leadership lessons in clear two-word phrases.

Boil every important leadership concept down to two words. For example, recite "calm confidence" to remind yourself how you want to appear in an important meeting.

> *"As a leader, you will learn that your fear, wherever it comes from, will be your biggest enemy and inhibitor."*

If you tend to interrupt, remind yourself to "talk less." Other two-word lessons to heed include:

- **"Deliver goodness"** – Each morning, American founding father Benjamin Franklin asked himself, "What good shall I do this day?" Before he went to bed, he asked, "What good have I done today?"
- **"Take notes"** – To show respect, take notes when people report to you. This also helps you maintain accurate records.
- **"Tidy up"** – Don't let your workspace become disorderly.
- **"Showcase setbacks"** – Don't tell arrogant stories about your heroics. Tell stories about when life got the better of you so that people can identify with you.
- **"Explore beliefs"** – Be aware of other people's spiritual beliefs and respect them.
- **"Get associated"** Join your industry's professional organization to network and stay current.

- **“Don’t brown-nose”** –Toadies get no respect. Ask your boss if he or she wants you to be honest, even when you disagree or have bad news.
- **“Give access”** – When working with high-level leaders, ask them to speak directly with your team to give them access to executives.
- **“Model courage” –** Be first to take a brave leap forward; your team will follow.
- **“Normalize discomfort”** – Experiencing discomfort is a healthy part of growth. Don’t let it hold you or your team back.
- **“Provide cover”** – Sometimes, leaders unfairly criticize teams that are not their direct reports. Stand up and provide cover for your team.

Self-discovery is a prerequisite for effective leadership.

You must know yourself intimately to lead others. What are your strengths, weaknesses, principles, morals and interests? Are you sharper and more productive in the morning or afternoon? Are you impulsive? Empathetic? If you’re like everyone else, you’re compassionate, judgmental, joyful, jealous, insecure and charitable. You’re normal.

Leaders must be aware of how their behavior affects others. You cannot give in to anger or impatience. Fear is often the underlying cause of extreme or uncontrollable feelings. You may worry about losing or not getting something you believe is yours. Fear will sabotage your best efforts; use self-realization to identify your fears and lessen their effect on your leadership.

> *“If you claim to be a leader, and you turn around and nobody is following you, you’re not a leader. You’re just out for a walk.”*

Integrity is a leader’s most important trait. Your words are meaningless unless you back them up with action. Your authenticity determines whether people follow you – particularly in difficult times. Align your actions with your principles. For example, don’t claim to prioritize family life and then work 75 hours a week.

Your upbringing has an enormous impact on how you navigate life. Growing up under challenging circumstances can become an advantage. For example, if your family struggled financially, you are likely to have empathy for those in a similar situation.

Be a role model for the people you lead.

Your team members will reflect your actions and attitudes. Since they take their cues from you, commits to a three-part Leadership Oath that holds you to the right mind-set and behavior.

> *"Remember, what's going on inside of you usually gets transmitted outwardly."*

Part one of the Leadership Oath says to lead yourself forthrightly and monitor your impulses and motivations. Honor your ideals and your morals and conscience. Don't let your ego rule your actions, avoid biased thinking and stay spiritually aware.

Your commitment to self-development leads to the second part of this Oath: Promise to be a productive leader who focuses on results. Understand that how you lead directly affects your company's revenue, profits and expenses. Embrace the responsibility of effective leadership and sound management. Make sure you and your team stay ethical and rational.

Being open to productive dissent calls on the third part of your Leadership Oath: Promise to be a wise and humble leader, understanding that leadership is a privilege. Treat your employees with dignity. Provide them with ample opportunities to grow professionally. Honor inclusivity and diversity. You have a crucial obligation to do right by the people who report to you.

McKinsey & Company consultants are famous for their expertise and independence. They speak up and tell it straight – to clients and their bosses. This freedom of expression springs from how McKinsey wants its people to regard their work. Its executives encourage the firm's consultants to maintain their "independent perspective."

Harsh reality sets in when the excitement of being a new leader wanes.

As you settle into your new position, you may eventually realize that not everything is the way you anticipated.

> *"You're only deemed successful as a leader if you get results. The drive to produce results is incessant."*

The initial excitement of a higher salary and spacious office soon wears off as responsibility and performance pressure build from every angle.Trying to meet everyone's expectations adds to your mental burdens. Leadership is a hard job for several two-word reasons:

- **"Unpredictable people" –** You can't anticipate how employees will behave. People can be sensible and mature or act like infants. If you operate in a childish atmosphere, you may sometimes find yourself behaving childishly.
- **"Relentless demands"–** You are only as good as your latest results. Regardless of your team's last successful project, your job is to continue performing at a high level.

- **"Uncomfortable change" –** Change typically makes people uneasy. But people and organizations can't evolve and improve without it. Pushing people outside their comfort zones is part of your responsibility. Be careful not to make them fear change because that would undermine morale and hurt productivity.
- **"No cavalry"** – Leaders are supposed to figure things out for themselves. Don't expect the cavalry to ride to the rescue when you're flailing around on the battlefield. Project self-assuredness even if you're riddled with insecurity about how to proceed. Think about other leaders or mentors you can ask for support.
- **"You're it"** – Leaders typically have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility. They tend to work excessively long hours, strive for perfection, and feel the need to respond promptly to their bosses' directives and their employees' needs. Since your employees won't "tell you about your contribution to the insanity," you need to be aware that trying too hard can compromise your well-being and leave your staff trying to live up to unreasonable expectations.

Take care of yourself and show some self-respect.

Stress is a common foe. Left unmanaged, it can damage your health. However, you don't need to risk your life or abandon people or work commitments to look after yourself. Establish your priorities, and then exercise the self-discipline to follow through on your promises to yourself.

> *"Self-care doesn't require selfishness; it requires a starting point."*

For example, one manager started attending a yoga class at 8 am, three days a week, hoping to attract colleagues. Before long, other women and a few men joined her in the training room. One company president decided to take a 90-minute lunchtime spinning class a few days a week to de-stress. At first, he felt a bit awkward taking a long lunch, but he realized he often worked late and occasionally worked on weekends. His value to the organization increased because the exercise routine made him a more effective leader.

Duane, a project manager, was overseeing a large, stressful initiative that brought out his worst side. He received "scathing feedback" on a 360-degree survey that cited his abrasiveness, impatience and explosiveness. A former competitive athlete, he hadn't exercised in several years because of work obligations. He decided to take morning runs and swap his fast-food lunches for salads. He settled down, subdued his quick temper, got in shape, and eventually married and had kids. Today, he manages business groups that generate millions of dollars.

Beware of leadership's creeping, seductive power.

The attention and power you gain as a leader are seductive. People carry out your orders without objection and applaud your decisions. Some leaders surround themselves with sycophants to massage their egos with endless agreement and compliments. Don't let people fawn over you; it's demeaning and counterproductive, and it robs you of awareness and information.

New leaders may feel tempted to take advantage of their privileged positions. They may act rudely or impatiently. Healthy self-assurance soon gives way to arrogance. They find themselves using their position to benefit themselves, instead of serving the people they lead. Hubris, or haughtiness, is the "single deadliest leadership contaminant," according to *The Leadership Killer,* written by author Bill Treasurer with former Navy SEAL officer John "Coach" Havlik. They warn that the buzz of being important can undermine a leader's humility, affecting even good people who have honorable intentions. Stay vigilant to keep your ego in check.

> *"You're only deemed successful as a leader if you get results. The drive to produce results is incessant."*

Modesty and self-restraint seem in short supply. Today, "sharing" means posting a selfie instead of inviting someone into a conversation. But you don't have to cast modesty aside. Modesty means resisting the temptation to inflate your ego. Allow others to take credit. Don't be afraid to ask for advice or opinions. That shows you're a sensitive, attentive and conscientious leader. Share your stories and experiences – particularly the negative ones. You can demonstrate how to learn from mistakes. Being humble is a particularly attractive trait, especially since it enables you to laugh at yourself.

Threat and intimidation rule when trust is absent.

One business owner's distrust of his workforce was so severe that he snuck out of his office to go on vacation. He pretended to step away to the bathroom, then exited through the backdoor because he suspected his employees would slack off when they noticed his absence. When a workplace lacks trust, leaders tend to be less trustworthy and to rule through threats, intimidation, fear and resentment.

“No amount of upfront scrutinizing and evaluation will entirely remove the risks that come with trusting others.”

A healthy, productive environment runs on mutual trust. Leaders need a degree of courage to trust their employees. You may sometimes be disappointed, but not taking the risk of trusting your people can cause even greater harm. New leaders must practice openness and honesty.

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