

Joe's List of Essential Leadership Books

1) The Bible

God cares about everything you, even your job and the company you work for. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men ..." [Colossians 3:23-24]

2) First, Break all the Rules (Buckingham)

People really don't change that much, so get the right people around you early on, and don't spend too much time hoping under-achievers will improve.

3) First Things First (Covey)

Rocks and sand in a jar ... put the rocks in first. Figure out what's really important to you, in the big scheme of things, and actually carve out time for those things each week. Everything else, then, will only get on your schedule where there's room left over.

4) God in the Marketplace (Blackaby)

God isn't just waiting for you on Sunday at church, he designed work and capitalism, and they fit into his master plan. It's all connected.

5) How to Win Friends and Influence People (Carnegie)

If you want to earn the respect of others, learn how to truly listen to people and care about what's important to them.

6) Getting to Yes (Fisher)

Nearly every interaction is a negotiation. Learn your opponent's position, needs, and motivations, and know them better than he does. Decide in advance what your backup plan is (your BATNA), should negotiations not succeed in reaching an acceptable outcome.

7) The Art of War for Executives (Krause)

Competing in business isn't all that different from engaging in war. Truths about how to win and how to defend are universal, and have stood the test of time, whether in business or in battle.

8) Team of Rivals (Goodwin)

Don't hire a team of people who will agree with you because you are the boss. Hire a team that will challenge you to see things from every angle. You are only as good as yourself in one case, or you can be as good as the combination of your entire team in the other.

9) Endurance (Lansing)

At times in your career, leading your team through crisis becomes the mission. You are still the leader, but your methods and your goals will necessarily have to change. Surviving a near death crisis can create life-long bonds and loyalty that are otherwise unimaginable.

10) The Last Lecture (Pausch)

Be prepared to realize what's truly important in your life, whether now through your own reflection, or later, in response to conditions out of your control.

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11) Start with Why (Sinek)

Every company needs to have their "why" ... why they exist, why customers should buy from them, why their employees should come to work. The book is full of repetition, so feel free to skip ahead when you sense repetition, or just watch his hugely popular Ted talk. The concept is solid and worth understanding, but the book isn't the best book ever written.

12) The Ideal Team Player (Lencioni)

Patrick describes the three key virtues that good team players possess (Humble, Hungry, & Smart), and goes on to say that all three virtues are necessary together. If even one of these virtues is missing or weak in a person, that person is not likely going to fit within, or excel in, a culture that prioritizes teamwork and team players.

13) Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey)

The quintessential leadership book of all time, a great introduction and/or first book a leader should consider reading as they begin their leadership path.

14) Good to Great (Collins)

A study of Good-to-great companies, which had been performing at or below the average stock market performance for 15 years, but then transitioned to "greatness," ... generating cumulative returns of at least three times the general stock market over the next 15 years.

15) Outliers (Gladwell)

Gladwell argues that achievement and expertise don't just happen, but rather they result from a combination of various crucial and sometimes seemingly superficial contextual factors, including which month a person is born, social skills, and enormous amounts of practice. Gladwell famously backs this up by showing that highly successful people often spent ten thousand hours or more practicing.

16) The Tipping Point (Gladwell)

At various points in modern history, ideas, products, messages, and other behaviors have suddenly and unexpectedly become very popular. The moment at which a social epidemic goes from invisible to seemingly ubiquitous is called a "Tipping Point." This book seeks to understand how social epidemics happen, and whether it's possible to start and control them.

17) Jack: Straight from the Gut (Welch)

Jack Welch narrates the story of his childhood, his college years and his career with GE from 1960 when he begins with them fresh out of college to 2001 when he retires as its Chairman. In five sections, Jack sets a backdrop and tells about his arrival, his management style and philosophy, his rise through the GE hierarchy and his avoidance of the company bureaucracy for as long as he could manage it.