



Book Leadership from the Inside Out

Becoming a Leader for Life

Kevin Cashman
Berrett-Koehler, 2008
First Edition:1998
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Recommendation

Kevin Cashman’s book on why personal development is essential to exemplary leadership is a classic. First published in 1998, this self-help manual quickly became a breakthrough business bestseller. This revised edition is now on the required reading lists of numerous universities and leadership programs around the globe. For this second edition, Cashman, a coaching consultant, conducted extensive new research. He asked corporate CEOs and company presidents to review his models of leadership and to critique his leadership propositions. Additionally, his firm interviewed corporate leaders to learn which areas of personal development they believe relate most closely to leadership. While some insights are obvious, others provide fresh ideas. The book offers a virtual coaching experience that will help you develop as a “whole person” and, thus, as a “whole leader.” *BooksInShort* recommends this respected work to all leaders. It offers valuable insights, ideas, lessons and tools they can use to improve themselves, their employees, their organizations and their communities.

Take-Aways

- Becoming an effective leader requires personal growth.
- Authentic leaders deliver value to those they lead and influence them positively.
- Leadership primarily depends on mastering the inner person, not on controlling external circumstances. Focus on building yourself up in seven areas:
- “Personal mastery”: Strive to discover the complete person you can become.
- “Purpose mastery”: Know your mission in life and work hard to achieve it.
- “Change mastery”: Accept the need to constantly evolve and grow.
- “Interpersonal mastery”: Develop lasting relationships with others.
- “Being mastery”: Learn to know your innermost self.
- “Resilience mastery”: Maintain your energy.
- “Action mastery”: Engage in self-coaching and in coaching others.

Summary

Three People Who Became Leaders from the Inside Out

The first example: An elementary school student named Peter suffered burns on 90% of his body. The nurses who cared for him constantly propped open his mouth and eyelids so they would not seal shut while Peter healed. The valiant boy spent a year in hospital undergoing painful rehabilitation. When he could finally walk, he

visited other patients to reassure them that they also could endure.

“Personal mastery is not a recent phenomenon; it is imbedded in the nature of the human experience.”

After his discharge from the hospital, Peter began junior high in a school where he didn’t know anyone. On his first day, the other students in the cafeteria avoided the disfigured boy. Only one girl, Laura, approached Peter and welcomed him. As they ate lunch, she looked intently at Peter, hoping to discover the real person behind the gruesome scars. Remarkably sensitive, Peter responded to her inquiring gaze with these simple words: “Everyone is avoiding me because they don’t know me yet. When they come to know me, they’ll hang out with me. When they get to know the real me inside, they’ll be my friends.” And because of Peter’s indomitable spirit, that is exactly what happened.

“Many of us know more about our favorite vacation spot, sports team or running shoes than we do about ourselves.”

The second example: The Toro Company manufactures lawn mowers. When Ken Melrose was Toro’s CEO, he assigned a design team to develop an innovative metal hood, hoping that the new hood would save production costs and time. Toro invested a lot of money in this design effort, but the team was unable to come up with a workable prototype. After much time and effort, the project turned out to be an utter failure.

“Purpose is bigger and deeper than our goals.”

Melrose summoned the members of the design team to his office. They were naturally anxious and fearful about the meeting’s consequences. However, when the designers entered the CEO’s office, they were amazed to find that they were the guests of honor at a celebratory party featuring refreshments and colorful balloons. Melrose told them, “Most innovative ideas don’t work out. We need to keep trusting, creating, risking and celebrating the good ‘tries’ – particularly when things don’t work out.”

“Managers improve what is; managers enhance what is; managers move forward what is. Leaders go beyond what is.”

The third example: A Minneapolis reporter interviewed a visiting Tibetan monk who had suffered a difficult past. The monk explained that when the Chinese authorities took over Tibet, they imprisoned and tortured him for many years. Now he was free. The reporter asked the serene monk what frightened him the most during his years of incarceration and physical abuse. The monk replied, “I was most afraid that I would lose my compassion for the Chinese.”

“If the experience of leadership is like being at the edge of an unfamiliar chasm, the act of leadership is building a bridge across that chasm.”

The big-hearted monk, former Toro CEO Ken Melrose and young Peter are “leaders of life” and epitomize exemplary personal growth. They can serve as role models because they lead “from the inside out.” Leadership involves mastery, but not of externals like public speaking, production techniques, and so on. Leading others requires mastering yourself first. “The essence of leadership” is “growing the whole person to grow the whole leader.” Assessments of thousands of leaders showed that those who lead from the inside out have three essential personal competencies:

1. **“Authenticity”** – They are self-aware and know who they are. They understand their own “strengths, vulnerabilities and development challenges.”
2. **“Influence”** – They communicate honestly about their true values and priorities to build connections with other people.
3. **“Value creation”** – Through their actions, they serve their “team, organization, world, family, community” and themselves with “passion and aspiration.”

“Try not to become a man of success. Try to become a man of value.” (Albert Einstein, theoretical physicist)

“Leadership is authentic influence that creates value.” This means that leadership that helps other people grow isn’t a matter of rank or a corporate system; it is a natural occurrence when people work together. Leadership exists at every level, inside and outside organizations. To lead others, focus on how to enrich their authenticity, expand their influence and create more value for them. Develop your internal capabilities and potential. Stop worrying about externalities. If you pay attention to your “core talents, core values and core beliefs,” your qualities as a leader automatically will grow. Your leadership effectiveness depends on your personal development, which is based on self-awareness born of quiet reflection. Think about what matters to you, whether you are leading the life you want to lead, and what gives your life “passion, meaning and purpose?” Don’t wait for a crisis to jolt you. Reach out to all of your possibilities now.

“It is not enough to be busy; so are the ants. The question is, what are we busy about?” (Henry David Thoreau, poet and philosopher)

The ability to lead from the inside out – to achieve the “master competency” of growing the whole person to grow the whole leader – rests on seven forms of self-mastery:

1. “Personal Mastery: Leading with Awareness and Authenticity”

To lead from the inside out, you must integrate your experiences into a useful context and work hard to develop the critical self-awareness you need to understand where to grow. Leaders who are skilled at personal mastery strive to learn exactly what they can become. They scrutinize their evolving personal faith, because what you believe shapes who you become. Inside-out leaders try to transform their “shadow beliefs” (unresolved psychological issues) into “conscious beliefs” (“self-conversations we have that reveal what we hold to be true,” like realizing the strength of your abilities). They lead with character – the “core of the leader” – and they assume responsibility and take action. They don’t delude themselves or just react to events and then cope. Personal authenticity is an unlimited, infinite quest. You can always become more open, self-aware and “life-affirming.” To build self-awareness, try to be less controlling and more trusting, seek coaching and feedback, surmount your resistance to change and fear of failure, and set time-based goals for achieving authenticity.

2. “Purpose Mastery: Leading on Purpose”

What is your reason for living? Discover your calling by identifying your core talents, the “signature” strengths you find fulfilling, satisfying to use. Think about the activities that give you that unbound sense of “flow.” To achieve purpose mastery, think through your priorities and core values to gain an understanding of what traits or

goals matter most to you. Commit to achieving your special purpose. To get the most from this reflection and discovery process, concentrate on how you can serve others so your life is purposeful. Learn from failure instead of fearing it. Stay flexible. Getting hung up in the details of a particular program of personal development is a symptom of a common mistake: confusing your path of discovery with your purpose. Instead, serve others to stay focused on your real mission. Your core purpose is the “sweet spot” where your talents and values come together, the launch pad for changing your “work-life” into your “life’s work.”

3. “Interpersonal Mastery: Leading Through Synergy and Service”

Research shows that most managers earn top marks for their intellectual prowess, but low marks for their ability to deal with people. Leaders cannot achieve maximum effectiveness unless they can develop winning relationships with those they lead. Often, this involves moving from an “I” form of leadership based on personal forcefulness to a “we” form of leadership based on collaboration. Both forms are acceptable; the challenge is to achieve a healthy balance in the journey from “personal power to relational power.” Interpersonal mastery demands total authenticity, the “life force of relationships.” Thus, the phrase “know thyself” defines a basic requirement for interpersonal mastery. Leaders with interpersonal mastery “listen authentically” by being present when others talk to them, “influence authentically” by dealing only in straight talk, “appreciate authentically” by being kind, “serve authentically” to exercise the core of real leadership and “share stories authentically” to inspire others. Do not assume that you know what your employees or colleagues are thinking or that you have reached them; to know for sure, ask.

4. “Change Mastery: Leading with Agility”

Change is the world’s single constant force. Unless you can adapt with the times, you will get left behind. Effective leaders must be comfortable with change; they must practice and teach agility and resilience. Bringing about positive change is never easy. It requires abandoning old habits and patterns and trying new approaches. Live totally in the present without worrying about the past or fearing the future. Pay close attention to unfolding events in your life yet keep the big picture in mind. Build “elasticity” through “mental-emotional stretching” exercises, such as noticing when you must adapt and thinking about how well you’re managing that process. This works even in small ways, like seeing how patient you can be when you’re stuck in traffic. As you build agility, you will develop your “inner sense” that you can handle whatever happens, even though change is scary. In effect, you must sail away from your well-known shore to a new shore you cannot yet see. Don’t fear this journey. Trust yourself. You cannot lead significant change unless you accept the need to change yourself.

5. “Resilience Mastery: Leading with Energy”

No matter how many hours they work, many executives cannot keep up with their responsibilities. That means they always feel stressed out and worn out. Better time management will not solve this problem; it will just leave you “feeling time-starved and disappointed.” Executives today need energy management. Time management focuses on managing, controlling, setting goals and pushing for productivity. In contrast, energy leadership focuses on leading, having passion and purpose, building “organizational engagement,” and feeling “satisfied.”

“The wisest mind has something yet to learn.” (George Santayana, philosopher and poet)

To bounce back from never-ending work, executives must master resilience. To learn about people who had mastered resilience, researchers studied 97 people who are 100 years or older. They found that these elders share certain traits: They are optimistic; they stay engaged; they exercise and remain active to maintain mobility; and they are happy and know how to handle loss and change. To stay resilient, get the sleep you need. Cut back slightly on your activity level. Exercise the right way and don’t push too hard. Warm up, perhaps by walking, and then stretch before exercising. Make sound lifestyle choices that mitigate stress. Influence or control whatever you can; accept the rest.

6. “Being Mastery: Leading with Presence”

People who lead from the inside out have a strong, dynamic presence. They know how to express their innermost selves in all situations and how to be intensely present and aware as they live their lives. They understand that “being is infinity contained in the eternally present moment.” Quiet reflection can help you get in touch with your true self. Find a regular time for silence, which allows you to reflect and develop vision, a requirement for leadership. Various types of meditation, such as transcendental meditation or mindfulness meditation, can help you tap into your inner self. To pursue other “paths to being,” spend time in nature or lose yourself in music.

7. “Action Mastery: Leading Through Coaching”

This represents the culmination of the other mastery activities, and it enables you to coach yourself and those around you. Your goal is to surpass what is inside and out. Being able to do that depends on three factors: “awareness, commitment and practice.” Build awareness by looking bravely at yourself and at your motivations and actions, and by asking others for objective feedback. Commitment depends on accepting responsibility for your actions and their consequences. Practice is just that: Engage in new ways of doing things, over and over, until your new behaviors become old habits.

When It All Comes Together

To achieve notable personal growth and to meet the inside-out leader’s primary goal of making a positive contribution to the world, faithfully apply the seven principles of self-mastery. If others within your organization, community or family do the same, authentic leadership can really soar. Your most important charge as a leader is to help improve the world for those around you. Such positive change becomes more attainable if many authentic leaders – individuals who lead from the inside out – all work hard to achieve it.

“There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow men, true nobility is being superior to your former self.” (Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher)

Don’t focus only on your personal growth. Encourage those around you to expand themselves in the same ways. Coach and mentor them so they, too, can grow from the inside out. Share these principles with all the leaders in your life.

About the Author

Kevin Cashman is the author of numerous leadership books, including *The Pause Principle*. He has advised senior executives in more than 60 countries.
