

LEADERSHIP

THIRD EDITION



NO MORE HEROES

David Pendleton
Adrian Furnham
Jon Cowell



Leadership

“A welcome third edition of a book I’ve recommended every year to my Executive MSc students. Beautifully written—informative, academic and easy to read. If only more books were written with such style.”

—Helen Ballard, MA (Oxon), MSc, C.Psychol. Programme Director,
MSc Strategy, Change and Leadership, University of Bristol, UK

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“... brilliant and beautifully written book on leadership. It is a treasure trove.”

—Michael West, *Professor of Organizational Psychology, Lancaster University Management School and Head of Thought Leadership, The King’s Fund, London*

“This book is a very practical guide for anyone who has to lead an organization. All humans have limitations, but none have quite the same. This book describes how to put together leadership teams that cover all the gaps and it does so in clear language without the jargon and gimmicks that make so many books on this subject unreadable!”

—Tony Tyler, *former Director General and CEO, IATA*

“Leadership is the most important problem in organizational affairs; when good leadership is in place, organizations thrive, and vice versa. In this second edition of their leadership classic, Professors Pendleton and Furnham provide an indispensable introduction to the key issues and the rational answers to this vexed but fascinating topic.”

—Professor Bob Hogan, *Hogan Assessment Systems*

“Over the years we’ve worked with many of the leadership edu-tainers with their latest books. Most of them are completely underwhelming. This book has definitions, academic rigour, and wisdom based on direct experience of what works and under what conditions.”

—Mike Haffenden, *CEO, Strategic Dimensions*

“Amidst the clutter of books on leadership, this book stands out. It helps make sense out of a whole range of leadership theories and integrates it all into the authors’ own compelling view of what makes leaders effective. I’ve found their framework very helpful in my own work.”

—Larry Benjamin, *Capwell Partners, Chicago, IL*

“Wonderful stuff....A really important and worthwhile book.”

—Sir David Haslam, Chairman, *National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (NICE)*, *Past President BMA*, *Past President Royal College of General Practitioners*

“Clear analysis of effective leadership and how leadership teams need to work together to be complete, the authors point us beyond ‘heroic leadership’ - the concepts are new, powerful and provocative.”

—Richard Olivier, *Leadership development consultant and Artistic Director of Olivier Mythodrama*

“I have seen the application of these ideas enable individuals and teams from around the world to understand what it is they need to do, and why, and align their personal and collective efforts to work together effectively and deliver results in a way they found astonishing.”

—Paul Chapman, *Fellow in Operations Management, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford*

“It is a great book, absolutely packed with insights, with a seductive logic of argument, which, I for one find irresistible. The propositions expressed in the book are securely supported with data or reference to the literature wherever possible, and if inadequate or no data is available, the authors try to make judgments they believe are reasonable. This is very helpful as they are experts at picking up trends. For this reason it makes for a very enjoyable read, a book you can read in one sitting or dip in and out. I do both... a book that is careful to link propositions to data and literature makes this book my stand alone recommendation.”

—Richard Canter, *Professor of Surgery Education, Oxford University Medical School*

“This leadership model is practical, simple, understandable and, most importantly, it works at all levels.”

—John Rishton, Chairman, SERCO;
Non-Exec Director Unilever, former CEO Rolls Royce, former CEO Royal Ahold N.V.

“So keep this book at your elbow. The ideas it brings to life are profoundly useful. And it’s an enjoyable read along the way.”

—Sir Rod Eddington, Chairman, *JP Morgan Australia and New Zealand*

David Pendleton • Adrian F. Furnham
Jonathan Cowell

Leadership

No More Heroes

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Foreword by Sir Rod Eddington: Great Leadership Matters

Great leadership matters—from the front line of any organisation to the CEO's office. It is the most important competitive advantage that any company can have. This is as true for organisations of all types—in politics, sport, government and business.

David Pendleton and Adrian Furnham have spent most of their lives understanding what makes leaders tick, and how to make them better at their critical leadership tasks. They have matched their academic knowledge of leadership with a comprehensive practitioners' view of what does and doesn't work in the business world. I've seen their passion for this subject up close for 25 years in Asia, Europe and Australia, across a number of companies and across cultures—great leadership has more common denominators than differences as we move from place to place.

Their collective wisdom has been distilled into this book. It combines their collective insights with numerous practical examples down through the centuries and across the disciplines.

Both authors have had considerable success as advisers to major companies because they combine the tough messages that come in honest feedbacks with constructive ideas on how to improve and grow as leaders. Understanding your own strengths and weaknesses as a leader is the first step on the journey to growth.

'Are leaders born or made?' is a question often asked. Whatever you might think, it is clear all of us must aspire to be the best we can be at our chosen leadership tasks. We all have a lot to learn and the learning process never finishes.

So keep this book at your elbow. The ideas it brings to life are profoundly useful. And it's an enjoyable read along the way.

Melbourne, VIC, Australia
March 2011

Rod Eddington

Sir Rod Eddington is currently Chairman of Infrastructure Australia and a Director of News Corp. Formerly, he ran Cathay Pacific Airways, Ansett Australia and British Airways, and was Chairman for Australia and New Zealand of JP Morgan. He received a Knighthood in 2005 for services to the aviation industry.

Preface

In the 5 years since the second edition, a great deal has changed. Governments change regularly and markets rise and fall, but the swings have been much larger and faster than usual. The coronavirus pandemic has overwhelmed the international economy and devastated lives. Disaster planning has been exposed as inadequate, demanding rapid experimentation and instant improvisation on a massive scale. Family and friends have become potential threats to health and wellbeing, and faith in institutions has become strained to bursting. At the national and international levels, leadership has been patchy. Countries led by women seem to have done rather better than the rest. Those governments that have acted swiftly and decisively have saved lives, while those who have prevaricated, minimised or denied the seriousness of the issues have cost lives in the tens of thousands.

Organisations have varied hugely at this time. Leaders in some sectors such as travel, transportation, hospitality and leisure have struggled to know how to survive lockdown. Supermarkets have done much better and supply chains seem to have held up. Other supply chains have not, and there has been a push to question globalisation arguing for a greater degree of national self-sufficiency. The world economic order is under huge strain.

What a time to be writing about leadership again! Yet, we have not centred this edition on the pandemic, which, however painful and disruptive, will surely pass. We have touched on it where it is relevant and sought to draw some lessons that are likely to be timeless. In this edition, we have updated all chapters while introducing new ideas in more detail.

We have introduced new overviews of leadership research in Chap. 1 to give a sense of perspective on a burgeoning field. In Chap. 3, we have a new

section on the importance of the interpersonal domain and proposed a major development of the Primary Colours¹® Model to make it three-dimensional in order to take account of longer timescales. We have expanded the writing team by adding Jon Cowell, CEO of the Edgecumbe Consulting Group, who has searched their assessment data to describe the ways in which highly rated leaders achieve our leadership tasks. This is a new Chap. 4 and a response to the feedback we received from Theodore Zeldin to provide more help to leaders who wanted to improve their performance. We have included a contribution, ‘The Leader’s Brain’, from neuroscientist Prof. Patricia Riddell of Reading University in Chap. 6. Chapter 7 now addresses the issue of managerial versatility and also asks the question ‘as you become more senior, do you have to become more strategic?’. Chapter 9 raises an interesting question about whether leadership effectiveness is now shifting in light of greater democratisation so that more agreeable leaders are increasingly favoured.

Our conviction has become even firmer that complete leadership is more likely to be demonstrated by teams of leaders whose strengths are complementary. Accordingly, we have changed the subtitle of the book to ‘no more heroes’. The book has grown by around 15,000 words but has maintained a focus on drawing out the practical implications of leadership for those whose task it is to lead in difficult times.

Bristol, UK
 London, UK
 Bristol, UK
 June 2020

David Pendleton
 Adrian Furnham
 Jon Cowell

¹ Primary Colours® is a registered trademark of the Edgecumbe Consulting Group Ltd.

Acknowledgements

Friends, colleagues and clients have helped us develop these ideas. David and Adrian studied together at Oxford in the late 1970s and were helped and encouraged by our doctoral supervisors Drs Michael Argyle and Jos Jaspars. Michael nagged us to complete our dissertations, made learning fun, structured our time and developed our skills in playing charades. Jos developed our understanding of theory and statistics. They believed in us.

Adrian would like to express his gratitude and thanks to Prof Robert Hogan whose imagination, brilliance and generosity with ideas have always inspired him. Adrian would also like to thank his support team at home, Alison and Benedict, for forgiving him spending too much time in the office scribbling.

Jon wants to acknowledge the support and forbearance of his beloved wife Lizzie and their three children; from Edgecumbe: Sarah Williams, Patrick Kelly, Chloe Hodgkinson, Sophie Mattholie, Megan Joffe, Bhavna Sawhani, Jo Summers and Mel Hacker for their intellectual and practical contributions; Matt Whitaker, Research Fellow at Imperial College London, Tom Booth at The University of Edinburgh, and Cuong Quang from Endeavour Programme for their brilliance in data analytics which has contributed invaluable to our new insights into ‘what good looks like’ (Chap. 4). Jon would also like to acknowledge the support of those Edgecumbe clients who have permitted us to anonymise and analyse their data. Finally, special thanks to Gill Evans, Director at HMRC, for her friendship and for being both the catalyst and the driving force for turning our research ambitions into reality, and Megan Vandome from the Cabinet Office for funding the first substantial study.

David thanks his colleagues at Innogy (now npower) who helped him develop the five leadership enablers (Chap. 5). Colleagues at Edgecumbe

Consulting have worked with the Primary Colours Model for years and several helped brainstorm the approach to Chap. 11. Colleagues at Oxford University's Saïd Business School also commented on the early drafts of the first edition. More recently, Dr Theodore Zeldin of Green Templeton College Oxford has provided encouragement to the addition of more practical guidance in the book. We have tried to do so. Clients have always been interested in debating ideas and testing them in their organisations. Three people stand out who started off as clients and have become good friends: Rod Eddington, Robert Footman and John Rishton.

More recently, colleagues at Henley Business School have been enthusiastic in their adoption of the ideas in this book in executive education: inter alia Steve Ludlow, Karis Burton, Claire Hewitt and Sabehia Mohamed. My colleagues at the Henley Centre for Leadership have also been practical in their support, especially Profs Bernd Vogel, Claire Collins and Karen Jansen. Andrew Godley, Professor and Head of the Department of Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour, has been a champion for these ideas. Their encouragement is gratefully acknowledged and much appreciated.

Finally, David wants to acknowledge the help, support and love of his wife and colleague Dr Jenny King. She is a consummate professional and a deeply impressive role model.

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Edgecumbe's clients he assesses, coaches and develops leadership capability, working with individual leaders, senior teams and whole organisations.

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Introduction

Leaders and leadership fascinate us at all times, and more so when engrossed in a crisis. When writing this edition in 2020, we are in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and hard on the heels of the financial crisis of 2008. Yet there have been few times in the last hundred and fifty years when crises and turbulence were very far away. Leaders and leadership are in our media and on our minds every day of the year.

During the last 100 years, there have been two World Wars (1914–1918 and 1939–1945) and conflicts around the globe which have given birth to international institutions designed to provide a forum for international leadership and diplomacy. We have seen the birth and demise of the League of Nations and the emergence of the United Nations. In the 1940s, the IMF and World Bank were created in response to both the Great Depression and World War II as a way to promote monetary cooperation, financial stability and economic growth for all countries.

Over the last 150 years, new technologies have informed the world about the changes happening around the shrinking globe in ways that bring each change increasingly closer and deeper into the consciousness of more people. Since the start of the twentieth century, the world's media have broadcast conflicts to all, and increasingly contemporaneously. Whether it was telegraph, radio, television or the internet, each new generation of technology had its own conflicts to communicate to each new generation.

Radio broadcast World War I, radio and TV broadcast World War II, and the Korea and Vietnam wars. TV and the internet have since broadcast all subsequent conflicts, increasing the consciousness of conflict, danger and the

need for effective leadership. So powerful has been the impact of communication that it was argued that the Vietnam War was lost in the living rooms of America.

We have also seen global economic changes. Arguably, the nineteenth century belonged to Britain and the British Empire turned the world's atlases pink. The twentieth century belonged to the USA and Japan as they became the dominant economies across the globe. Already, the twenty-first century seems to belong to China with its double digit growth sustained for many years and it already overtook Japan to become the second biggest economy by 2011. It is believed that China will overtake the USA economically in the next decade or so.

By contrast, the periods of stability have been few. Focusing on economics in the last half century, the 1970s saw major problems with inflation in many western nations. In the 1980s, many Latin American countries defaulted on their debt and there was a savings and loan (building society) crisis in the USA where more than 700 such institutions went out of business. Year 2008 saw global financial turmoil that persisted for the next decade.

The ubiquity of change makes it unsurprising that our fascination with leaders and leadership continues unabated. In this book, we make passing mention of leadership in other realms but we are principally concerned with the leadership of organisations in the public and private sectors. We now know a great deal about effective and ineffective leadership by observing the events around us but we know a great deal more from the last 100 years of systematic research on the topic. In this book, we will describe much of this research and locate the firm and generalisable findings we can all use as a basis on which to understand and act.

Our definition of leadership is this: ***to create the conditions for people and organisations to thrive and achieve significant goals.*** Thus, gardening may be a better analogy than sports or fighting a war. Gardeners have to understand the circumstances in which they are working and work with the elements and the plants to create the conditions for sustainable growth. The difference of course is that, in organisations, leaders are not dealing with plants but with smart people who increasingly demand a voice in how decisions are made!

We will not avoid controversy but we will seek to resolve it, where possible, by reference to sound evidence rather than conjecture. In Chap. 1, we describe the history of research on leadership, focusing largely on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In Chap. 2, we show to what extent leadership makes a difference to the performance of organisations. We briefly describe the

evidence against this assertion before setting out the overwhelming evidence for it and underline a number of themes around effective leadership which we will incorporate later in models and suggestions of our own.

In Chap. 3, we describe Pendleton's Primary Colours Model of leadership: a simple means of describing the domains in which leaders must operate and the tasks they need to achieve. We offer the model as a map of the territory of leadership showing the interrelations between the three domains and the new agenda for longer-term leadership. In Chap. 4, we describe how some of the most highly rated leaders perform leadership tasks in the Primary Colours Model. In Chap. 5, we concentrate on the task of Leading that lies at the heart of the Primary Colours Model: of balancing and co-ordinating the contributions required of effective leadership and we describe five enablers that make leadership more likely to succeed.

Chapter 6 makes the case that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for any individual to be a complete leader. The reasons are logical, psychological and neurological and their implications are important. For years, learning and development specialists in organisations have proceeded on the assumption that all limitations can be turned into strengths. We suggest otherwise and recommend a different way of thinking about the problem. We opine that there may need to be work around solutions as well as developmental actions to work on any significant limitation. In Chap. 7, we consider the implications for teams. We show that, while complete individual leaders may be hard to find, teams hold out the possibility of finding complementary leaders who demonstrate complete leadership together. We will describe several examples of such leaders who have created effective leadership teams and who have achieved a great deal thereby. We assert that we don't need another leader who tries to be complete alone. Those who try to be so are probably condemned to a career of mediocre leadership.

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 pick up the theme of individual differences. Chapter 8 examines the role of intelligence in leadership and Chap. 9 does the same for personality in leadership. Chapter 10 tackles the subject of leaders who fail and derail, describing some of the reasons why this happens and what might be done to avoid them.

In, Chap. 11, the final chapter, we attempt to draw out the implications of what has been covered in the rest of the book. Chapter 11 sets out a program of action in the form of a story describing a fictitious character facing the challenges of leadership. It is intended to draw out the key lessons from the rest of the book.

This book is written for leaders in all walks of life, and we hope that we will find readers among those who advise and consult, train and develop, educate

and coach. It is also for those who have to evaluate the quality of leadership in an organisation: executives, non-executives and investors. Different types of readers are likely to want to access the book differently. Leaders, non-executives and investors who want to consider our approach to leadership and its implications, might only want to read Chaps. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 11 since these are the most practical and original. Those who educate and coach will also need to understand the background provided in Chaps. 1 and 2 in order to compare our approach with those of others. Those with a more psychological orientation will also need to look at Chaps. 8, 9, and 10.

We have attempted to produce a book that is intellectually satisfying but not essentially academic. Accordingly, it has been fully referenced. We want to point out the reasons why a particular approach to leadership is to be followed, not merely to provide practical suggestions. Our intention is to be evidence-based, conceptually coherent and entirely practical.

The evidence we cite throughout the book will draw most heavily on published research, favouring the larger studies and meta-analyses of other published works. This approach makes the best use of the most data. In the attempt to be conceptually coherent, we suggest models that are simple but not simplistic. In this way, we will attempt to make our ideas easily memorable and the more robust for their basis in published evidence. Most of all, we attempt to draw out the practical implications of our suggestions so that our thoughts can make a difference if put into practice.

Finally, for reasons that are clearly described in the book, our original working title for the book was, 'We Don't Need Another Hero' but we realised we had to state that the book was about leadership first and foremost. In this edition, however, we have allowed the theme to be picked up in our subtitle. The third edition is 'Leadership: no more heroes'.



1

The History of Thinking About Leadership

Introduction

The topic of leadership is controversial. There are those who argue that leadership is greatly overvalued: that the success of organisations derives at least as much from serendipity as from strategy, vision or leadership. They argue that attempts to identify the characteristics of great leaders have proven to be inconsequential or contradictory and that generalisable lessons about leadership are elusive. We believe that these arguments may have some validity but that they do not represent the overwhelming weight of research evidence; evidence that has become more convincing since the first edition of this volume.

Philosophers, historians, novelists and journalists have always been interested in what makes a great (and a failed) leader: what are their unique characteristics and strengths; allowable weakness and peculiar foibles; and what makes them fall from grace, get forgotten or get lionised for all time? Do special circumstances (crises) throw up certain types of leaders who are only suitable in that situation? Certainly, the study of leaders, organisations, countries and empires seem to need frequent updates as yesterday's heroes become today's controversies and tomorrow's embarrassments.

World history is littered with examples of leaders in a time of crisis who became a poor leader in a time of stability and vice versa. The history of organisations provides examples of business leaders who are victims of the Peter principle (promoted until their level of incompetence is reached). Thus, is succession planning for leaders really viable, given that circumstances change so often? Key to all these dilemmas is one of the oldest questions of all:

are leaders born (with some genetic disposition) or are they made (by chance, learning or circumstance)?

After generations of research effort and observation, there is a lot we know about leadership. There is evidence to answer a great many questions such as what is leadership?, does leadership matter?, how are leaders chosen?, who is likely to become a leader?, why do leaders fail?, how do leaders build effective teams? and the like. This chapter will describe several attempts to study leadership over time and suggest an emerging story on the basis of which we can begin to understand leadership differently. It will also include a section on followers and followership: a theme that has come into sharper focus since the first edition of this volume.

Disciplinary Perspectives on Leadership

Leadership has always been studied through the lens of different approaches or disciplines. Each brings its own approaches. The historian will approach leadership somewhat differently from the psychologist or management scholar. They seek out and interpret the data differently, focus on different causes and offer different explanations. Even within a single discipline, there are dramatic differences. This is not to assert the virtues of one over the others. Rather it is to point out the complexity of leadership and the different ways of making sense of it.

Consider the multiple ways in which psychologists from various sub-disciplines write and think about leadership. These approaches fall broadly into three categories concerning how leaders emerge, who they are and what they do.

1. How leaders emerge

- (a) *The biographical approach.* Neo-psychoanalysts have written about famous leaders like Luther and Gandhi. There have also been fine essays on famous despots who often intrigue readers the most. Psychobiography is a psychological analysis of the conscious and unconscious forces that shape an individual life. Most leaders are complex figures. They often have phenomenal drive and persistence. They overcome adversity and rejection. The biographical approach is often focused on deceased leaders and it can offer new and insightful perspectives on their motives and drives. This is not to be confused with

the autobiographical approach where leaders seek to influence how they will be appreciated and remembered: to determine their own place in history before others do it for them.

- (b) *The educational or developmental approach.* What creates a leader? What educational experiences, both formal and informal, shaped them? How, when and why did leaders develop their beliefs, skills, knowledge, motivation and drive? This also speaks to the question of training and developing leaders of the future. This approach is about the development of leaders and so frequently focuses on the talented or high-potential group. It addresses the question of what is trainable? Can people be taught to be good or better leaders, and if so, how? It seeks to define both the minimal and optimal preconditions for good leadership on which developmental activities can work to transform potential into fully realised leadership capability.
- (c) *The environmental approach.* We shape our environment and afterwards it shapes us, as Winston Churchill once said of the British Parliament. Leaders frequently send out witting and unwitting signals about how they want to be perceived by the decisions they implement about the design and function of the buildings they inhabit. Organisational cultures are frequently typified by such signals as the location of the CEO's office, the differences in office size and furniture found there, the ease or difficulty of gaining access to the executive suite and the like. Even the layout of the furniture influences behaviour in the office and conversations conducted across desks tend to be more formal than those in more comfortable settings. Leaders create and modify physical environments with psychological and cultural consequences, creating physical analogues of their leadership style and approach.

2. Who leaders are

- (a) *The personality approach.* This is perhaps the best known approach. Whilst some writers include ability and values under this heading, the majority focus on personality traits. They aim to discover these traits in highly successful leaders that explain their success. The best trait studies look at longitudinal data so that one can separate cause from correlation, but more typically, these studies are correlational and can merely infer causality. This approach has seen a significant revival since the 1980s due to the development of the so-called Five Factor model

of personality which has now shown highly significant correlations with both leadership emergence and effectiveness, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

- (b) *The clinical approach.* Psychologists, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts have taken an interest in the abnormal, disordered side of leaders which sits alongside their skill and determination and frequently accounts for their drive. Many are known to have both acute and chronic disorders, which they often exploit for their own ends. The psychopath, the narcissist, the manic depressive leader are far from rare. By one definition of abnormal (i.e. the statistical definition), all leaders are abnormal since they are exceptional. The question for the clinical approach is how their problems helped and hindered them both in the journey to the top and their experience once there.
- (c) *The evolutionary approach.* It has been suggested that leaders tend to be taller, more handsome and fitter than the average person of their age and stage in life. Evolutionary psychologists looking at other animals and our own primitive past have noticed that leaders have always tended to be fit and strong; bright and 'wily'; feared by adversaries; and admired by followers. Some physical anthropologists have noted the shape of successful leaders. Whilst we can all think of short, tubby, bald exceptions to the rule, it is also apparent from our elected politicians and from the CEO's of top companies that they are often taller and more attractive than the average person of their age. In US presidential elections in the television age, for example, the taller candidate has usually won and the idea of a 'commanding presence' persists.

3. What leaders do

- (a) *The cognitive approach.* Cognition is about thinking and, therefore, involves perception, information processing, understanding, knowledge and sometimes creativity. One essential feature of leadership is decision-making. Cognitive psychologists are interested in all aspects of decision-making from decision-making under uncertainty to decision-making in groups. How do leaders typically make decisions: to hire or fire, buy or sell, advance or retreat? Do they consult others or make decisions alone; do they agonise or act impulsively? What sort of data do they seek before they decide? Perhaps most