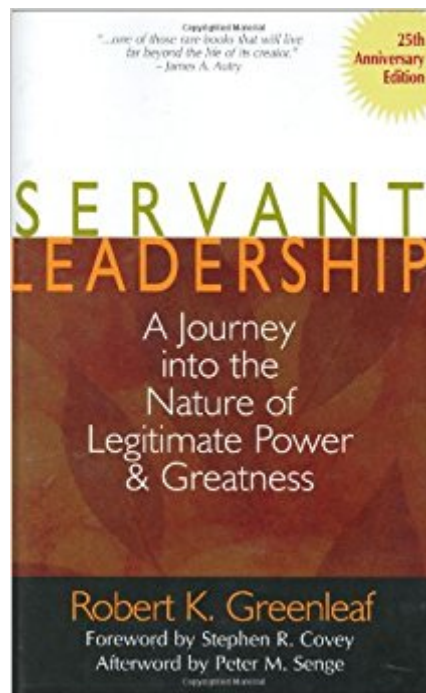




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Servant Leadership: A Journey Into The Nature Of Legitimate Power And Greatness 25th Anniversary Edition



Synopsis

A classic work on leadership for business men and women, government leaders and all persons in positions of authority.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you are looking for a leadership book with a different approach from the usual leadership book, and one that is intellectually stimulating and thought-provoking, then you should definitely read this book of collected talks, essays, and articles from Robert K. Greenleaf. Armed with varied and extensive civilian leadership experience, Greenleaf boldly took me on "a journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness." This journey challenged me early on when Greenleaf stated that the traditional hierarchical leadership used in most organizations, one person in charge as the lone chief atop a pyramidal structure, is the likely cause of most of our leadership problems. Greenleaf favored another, less frequently used tradition where the principle leader is "primus inter pares" - first among equals. Throughout the book, Greenleaf made a compelling case that "primus inter pares" exists in important places with conspicuous success. With my leadership experience rooted in the traditional military hierarchical structure, at times it was difficult to understand Greenleaf's perspectives on the first or second read. Greenleaf's insights into the servant as leader (one who makes sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served) in the first chapter lays the foundation for his subsequent chapters: the institution as servant, trustees as servants, servant leadership in business, servant leadership in education, servant leadership in foundations, servant leadership in churches, servant leaders, servant responsibility in a bureaucratic society, and

America and world leadership. With all the recent attention focused on moral and ethical breakdowns within some large and powerful institutions (Enron, WorldCom, Arthur Anderson, the Catholic Church, etc.), this book's continued relevance is obvious. Overcoming my challenges in reading this book was definitely worth the effort.

This collection of Robert Greenleaf's lectures, essays and articles is truly remarkable, if for nothing else, for its timing. Though originally compiled and published in the late seventy's, Robert Greenleaf's thoughts on Leadership were originally written and spoken in the 50's, 60's and early 70's ---- Fully 20 years ahead of the surge in popularity of "teams", "loyalty", "mutual-service covenants", and "empowerment". As Nagle and Pascarella point out in *LEVERAGING PEOPLE AND PROFIT - THE HARD WORK of SOFT MANAGEMENT*, "the next frontier of competitive advantage lies in engaging and energizing the creativity and enthusiasm of the workforce". It was Robert Greenleaf who first marked the trail to this frontier by teaching business managers how to lead by serving the needs of all stakeholders. Greenleaf understood (and clearly articulated) the need to shift the workplace environment away from "compliance", and toward "enthusiastic engagement". He understood that the scientific workplace created by F.W. Taylor was but a stepping stone to a more civil, more satisfying, and ultimately more productive covenant of service, satisfaction, and growth. Though at times ponderous and obscure, Greenleaf's work should be required reading for fresh-faced MBAs who have grown accustomed to the pabulum of simple formulas and buzzwords. Perhaps if more of them were forced to chew their way through his thought processes, there might be more LEADERS and fewer paint-by-numbers B-school clones.

If you read anything about the idea of servant leadership, you are likely to encounter a passing reference to Robert Greenleaf's work, if not an outright declaration of adoration. His book "Servant Leadership" and the essay entitled "The Servant as Leader" which is the first chapter of the book have now influenced multiple generations of leaders. He has shaped the language and cast a vision for effective and ethical leadership based first and foremost on serving others, which continues to gain traction in a culture where servanthood may elicit initial impressions of weakness or ineptitude. For offering a compelling alternative to cut-throat, me-first leadership, we all owe Greenleaf a debt of gratitude. Nonetheless, as truly groundbreaking as this book and its ideas have been over the past 40 years, it's a chore to read. Greenleaf's writing style is rather cumbersome, and his points are sometimes difficult to understand. He writes primarily from an abstract, theoretical perspective, and I found myself often wishing that he would have integrated more stories, more practical examples into

his writing. I often felt like he was possibly offering a reasonable idea, but I'd need to read about its actual implementation in a real-life setting to really understand what he was saying. But those examples were few and far between. It is clear that Greenleaf was a brilliant man, and his influence in leadership within corporate, educational, and religious institutions continues to resonate into the 21st-century. But rather than reading this book, I'd recommend that those who are interested in servant leadership should read his initial essay ("The Servant as Leader") and then move on to books written by more accessible authors (i.e. Ken Blanchard). I'm glad to have plowed through this book because of its place in the modern leadership canon, but I'm hard-pressed to recommend it to anyone but the most serious of servant leadership scholars.

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