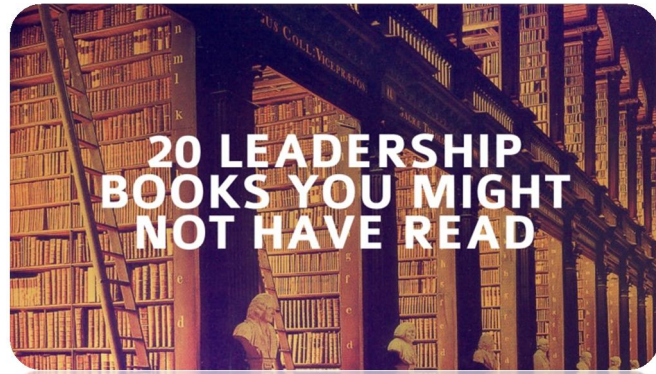


20 Leadership Books You Might Not Have Read

By Mike Myatt, Chief Executive Officer, N2growth



If you know me, or have read this blog for any length of time, you know that I believe all great leaders are also voracious readers.

In fact, I would go so far as to say reading is simply a necessity if you're serious about leadership. I'm constantly asked for reading recommendations, and rather than provide you with the current best seller list du jour (you can get that anywhere), I've compiled a list of 20 leadership books everyone should read, but may not have. The list below (in no particular order) is comprised of leadership lessons from Ancient History, US History, Religious History, Military History, and yes, I threw in a few of my favorite business business classics as well. Enjoy...

1. **The Founding Fathers On Leadership** - There are great lessons to be learned from those who placed their lives at risk to give birth to a nation founded on the ideals of liberty and freedom. If you read this book and don't find inspiration to up your game, then it's time to do some serious thinking.
2. **The Bible** - Whether you're religious or not, there is simply no greater blueprint for developing wisdom, discernment, humility, and every other leadership trait known to man. The leadership examples outlined in Scripture are simply second to none.
3. **Lincoln on Leadership** - Many regard Lincoln as our nation's greatest president, and while I happen to personally lean towards Washington, there is no disputing Lincoln's stature as a great statesman and leader. Coming from a dysfunctional family, enduring a long line of personal and professional failures leading up to his presidency, and having to deal with a nation divided by civil war, Lincoln's accomplishments as a leader are nothing short of remarkable.
4. **On Becoming A Leader** - Two words – Warren Bennis. Having the opportunity to get to know Warren has been a great gift to me, and reading his thoughts on leadership will surely be one for you. Spending time gleaning insights from the man many refer to as the father of the modern practice of leadership is time well spent.
5. **The Essential Drucker** - Peter Drucker was the most noted management thinker of his time. This book combines several of his best pieces in one volume, and is a must read for anyone looking to understand organizational, operational, or cultural management theory. I had the chance to meet Peter on two different occasions. I didn't know him well by any measure, but the brief encounters created a lasting impression.
6. **Bonhoeffer** - Few men have aligned their beliefs with their actions in the way that Dietrich Bonhoeffer did. A brilliant theologian hanged by Hitler, Bonhoeffer's life is a testimony of ethical conviction that many of our leaders today should go to school on. This is a gripping read that you won't be able to put down.
7. **Serve To Lead** - If you're interested in servant leadership, then this book was written for you. My friend Jim Strock has created a manifesto that is in my opinion the preeminent work on the subject. This is a must read for anyone in a leadership role. By the way, Jim's book on Reagan is also first rate.
8. **Washington: A Life** - A life study in character and doing the right thing. A man who could have been king, but wasn't interested. Everything about George Washington is a case study in

leadership. This book is also extremely well written and gives a vivid account of our nation's first President.

9. **Hard Facts, Dangerous Half-Truths And Total Nonsense** - Jeffrey Pfeffer and Bob Sutton take aim on popular business theory by unwinding six widely accepted business theories. If you're one who likes to debunk tired rhetoric and practices (I am), you'll love the candor and practical intelligence of this book.
10. **Lone Survivor**- This book chronicles the story of Operation Redwing as told by SEAL team leader Marcus Luttrell – the lone survivor of the operation. I read this book in a single sitting and found it to be a gripping account of courage, duty, honor, and service beyond self.
11. **Xenophon's Cyrus the Great** - If you struggle with leading in a complex culture, then you'll find there is much to be gleaned from Cyrus the Great. This is perhaps one of the earliest accounts of leadership, but one of the most powerful. To conquer a nation is one thing, to gain their respect and lead them with benevolence after the fact is quite another. This is a fascinating read.
12. **True North** - Bill George, former CEO of Medtronic provides a simple step-by-step guide for being an authentic leader. This book is a great help for leaders who desire to not live in emotional or intellectual conflict. If you need help in aligning vision, values, strategy, tactics, expectations, and outcomes then this book is for you.
13. **Leading Change** - Being a Harvard Business School Professor doesn't automatically qualify you to give leadership advice. That said, this rule doesn't apply to professor Kotter. This book uses real world case studies to break down the elements that must be identified and managed in order to lead successful change. If you or your organization struggles with change, then this book needs to be on your reading list.
14. **EntreLeadership** - Most people think of Dave Ramsey as a commentator on personal financial advice. True, but Dave is also a brilliant businessman, who oozes wisdom and offers sound counsel to anyone attempting to be a better leader. This is a relatively new book, so if you haven't read it yet, make sure you do.
15. **First, Break All The Rules** - I have not had the opportunity to meet Marcus Buckingham, but I'm a huge fan. Most of you know that I have long believed that while conventional wisdom might be conventional, it rarely constitutes wisdom. In this book Buckingham flips conventional business theory on its head and challenges you to reexamine how you look at the world. This is a must read book for any leader.
16. **George Washington's Rules of Civility** - No leader in history worked on building character more than George Washington. Character was more than a trait, it was a discipline of study for Washington. This wisdom in this book, is in my opinion, has regrettably all but disappeared in today's world – regardless of what you observe around you, leadership is at its best when civility, character, on honor are visibly present.
17. **Robert E. Lee on Leadership** - Lee was not only a great leader, but he was a true gentleman with character beyond reproach. Leadership lessons from General Lee's life can be used in virtually any situation during any era. A must read for all leaders.
18. **Churchill on Leadership** - Winston Churchill is one of my favorite leaders of the 20th Century. A man of both keen insight and intellect, but also a humble man with a great sense of the importance of his role not only to the country, but to the world in which he lived. This is a timeless account of a very principled man whose leadership may have just saved the world.
19. **Exceeding Expectations** - This book contains leadership lessons from retired Air Force General Bill Looney. General Looney is a leader who knows something about exceeding expectations. He did it himself during a career that spanned 4 decades, but most importantly, he inspired others to do the same. This book is very readable, and has very actionable advice for leaders.
20. **Benjamin Franklin's The Art of Virtue** - This book is Benjamin Franklin's personal guide for how one should live their life. Much like Washington's *Rules of Civility* above, it's a masterclass on character.