

# FOCUSED LEADERSHIP

POWERFUL GUIDE TO  
LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE



**NANCY PROFFITT**  
**PROFFITT MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS, INC.**  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
TRUSTED ADVISORS NETWORK LLC

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# FOREWORD

In over forty years of experience in management and consulting with both large and small organizations from every conceivable industry, we have observed a growing trend: there is an overabundance of managers and an increased lack of leaders. This situation clearly creates a negative impact on an organization's ability to grow and to compete. It seems to beg a crucial question: If leadership is so critical to an organization's success, why then, isn't there more of it? In exploring this question we have made several general observations concerning leadership; and to our delight, we were pleased to see most of them have been succinctly addressed in this book.

The first observation is that leaders come in different ages, genders, roles, profiles, diversities, and behavioral styles. There is no one size fits all template for a leader, which explains why so many attempts at leadership development and/or training continue to fail.

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Second, there are specific practices and processes which successful leaders understand and consistently implement. One of these practices is their ability to comprehend big picture thinking and translate that understanding into specific, measurable goals which are then cascaded down throughout the organization. Implementing a goal alignment process within an organization serves two important functions.

1. It has the ability to inspire and impact the entire organization by focusing everyone on the steps needed to achieve results.
2. It provides a process to deal with the inevitability of constant change required to consistently produce longterm, measurable results.

Congruent with this, the authors have spelled out an extremely effective alignment process in this very timely book. We have found whenever this specific organizational alignment process is put into place, it not only provides valuable direction to an organization, it also creates an environment where leaders seem to blossom from within and throughout the organization. The beauty of it is, when leaders focus on creating and implementing effective processes, they become keenly aware it is the people and the alignment of their activities, behaviors, and attitudes that make results a reality.

In this well-written quick read, you will gain a valuable understanding of these key issues along with many other important insights. The authors did not intend to present a step-by-step guide that would become the end-all on how to

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become a successful leader. It is, rather, a refreshingly new and dynamic perspective on the entire subject of leadership that will share proven methods for you to get started on the right path to solving your organization's leadership challenges.

Leaders who decide to rise to the opportunity for leadership growth will enjoy considerable benefit both personally and professionally. In our experience, the principles the authors have laid out are universal. They work in government, family-owned companies, large organizations, small organization, start ups, departments within organizations, not-for-profits, volunteer organizations, and even in one's own personal life. Their approach is logical and well tested. In two words, it works. Anyone who takes their message seriously will find themselves indebted to the authors for having shared their insights on such an important subject.

James B. Godshall,  
Past President  
Total Quality Institute

(Mr. Godshall is an internationally recognized business leader, consultant, and author of several continuous quality improvement materials used in organizations around the world.)

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# LEADERSHIP IS KEY

## - CHAPTER ONE -

Few subjects receive more attention in business than leadership—and for good reason. Leadership is the linchpin that holds organizations together as they face constant change while also providing the guidance and innovation necessary to succeed and grow in a global business environment.

Technological advancement and the global business environment are moving and changing at warp speed. This dynamic environment creates unprecedented challenges: commoditization of markets, fierce competition, and increasing pressure to get more and better results faster. Some companies have excelled, whether despite or because of this turbulence, and become multi-billion-dollar juggernauts. Apple, Amazon, and others have achieved success awed by many, while multinational organizations of decades-long standing file for bankruptcy. Former

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blue-chip companies are being surpassed by young startups that are more responsive, customer-focused, and flexible, and whose leaders understand the importance of keeping it that way no matter how large the organization becomes. Say what you will about personal leadership styles; the likes of Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg clearly understand the importance of leadership and building future leadership teams.

Every leadership team, regardless of the size, scope, or purpose of the organization, must continually redefine organizational structures, expand capabilities, find new customer channels, and retain the best people all while more work falls on the shoulders of fewer and fewer contributors. And of course, it all has to be done faster than ever before.

While there is no magical answer to any of these issues, much less all of them, certain themes emerge in this business environment that become absolutely necessary for survival. Among them are leadership, teamwork, alignment, empowerment, accountability, speed to market, and process excellence. The most important is **leadership**.

Bruce Henderson, former CEO of Boston Consulting Group Inc. and author of *Henderson on Corporate Strategy* writes, “All organizations do change when put under sufficient pressure. The pressure must be either external to the organization or the result of very strong leadership.”

John Maxwell, in his book *The 17 Irrefutable Laws of Teamwork*, tells us that “The single biggest way to impact an organization is to focus on leadership development.”

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There is almost no limit to the potential of an organization that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders and continually develops them.”

Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, said, “Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.”

Brian Tracy, in *The 100 Absolutely Unbreakable Laws of Business Success* states, “Leadership is the most important single factor in determining business success or failure in our competitive, turbulent, fast-moving economy.” He goes on to say there has never been a greater need for leaders at all levels than there is today.

Most executives agree that these ideas about leadership ring true in their organizations every day. They tell us this all the time. “There’s a dearth of leadership in our company. I pay good money to hire top leaders! Why can’t they lead? I have to admit we have a real shortage of leadership in our organization today.”

Having said that, there is another harsh reality that must be faced. Regardless of your position as an executive and regardless of your organization’s position in the marketplace, nothing you have done thus far ensures your success in the future. Only one thing will, and that one thing is the very challenge facing you today. You must have a fail-safe system of leadership in your organization that can guide it to **high and sustainable** levels of success and achievement.

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Sounds great, you say. But **how**? It's not as difficult as you might think, but the solution that works is not the one most organizations are using.

Most of the executives with whom we've worked have told us their efforts to resolve leadership challenges have been random and fragmented. One initiative barely gets rolling when the next leadership silver bullet takes its place. We see it all the time: an executive reads the hot new business book or attends a workshop and charges in to implement the promised quick fix. They don't see immediate results, so they throw out the initiative and start over. No initiative ever gets any real traction, no change is achieved, team members get frustrated, and results stagnate or decline. These and similar confessions are living testaments to the difficulty of finding and committing to a comprehensive and effective approach that addresses the root cause of your organization's leadership challenges.

Team members, frequently the target of both the failed initiatives and the blame when they don't work, should not be faulted for this. Very few people wake up in the morning planning to go to work to see what they can screw up. The majority of team members at every level want to contribute to meaningful and measurable outcomes. This book is about what is getting in their way.

This is, in short, straight talk for those who are tired of poring through book after book or attending seminar after seminar in search of **what to do** to improve their leadership challenges only to find yet one more true-but-useless theory on the nature of leadership.

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Three things you should know before we go on. First, this book is intentionally brief. We live in a sound bite world. Research says the current attention span for most adults is six seconds. We've kept this book as simple and brief as possible without diluting the power of the message. It is a quick read with a powerful punch, designed to make a real difference for both your career and your organization.

Second, the message presented here is not intended to be a quick fix or an easy answer. There **are** no easy answers when it comes to something as complex as leadership. People are complex! But the fact that there are not easy answers does not mean there are not **effective** answers. That is what this book offers: effective answers to show you what to **do** to achieve your desired results.

Third, this is not your typical book about leadership. It is a 180-degree turn from long-held assumptions about leadership. Retired Army Colonel Dandridge M. Malone said, "The very essence of leadership is its purpose. And the purpose of leadership is to accomplish a task. That is what leadership does, and what it **does** is more important than what it is and how it works."

We agree 100% with the Colonel's definition of leadership, and that's why this book is not about what leadership is or about how it works. It is about what leadership **does**! And, in the words of Peter Drucker, "Leadership is all about results." So is this book. We are excited about what this can mean to your success and the success of your organization!

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## — Thought Provoking Questions —

1. What role does leadership play in the success of your organization?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest), how would you rate the overall effectiveness of leadership in your company today?
3. What would it mean to your organization's results if your rating were to increase by 1 point? 2 points?
4. What are the risks for your organization if you answered anything lower than a 10?

