



The Next Generation Leader
Andy Stanley

About the Author

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The Summary

The more you know about leadership, the faster you grow and the farther you are able to go as a leader. Learning from the experiences of others enables you to go farther faster. It is this simple truth that inspired me to write *The Next Generation Leader*.

I consider it my job to pass along the things I have learned about leadership to the next generation. In leadership, *success* is *succession*. If those coming along behind me aren't able to take what I have offered and build on it, then I have failed in my responsibility.

I began this project with a series of questions:

1. What are the leadership principles I wish someone had shared with me when I was a young leader?
2. What do I know now that I wish I had known then?
3. Of all that *could* be said about leadership, what must be conveyed to next generation leaders?

I identified five concepts that serve as the outline of this book. These represent what I believe to be the irreducible minimum, the essentials for next generation leaders:

1. *Competence*: leaders must channel their energies toward those areas of leadership in which they are most likely to excel.
2. *Courage*: the leader is the one who has the courage to initiate, to set things in motion, to move ahead.
3. *Clarity*: a next generation leader must learn to be clear even when he or she is not certain.
4. *Coaching*: you may be good, but without a coach you will never be as good as you could be.
5. *Character*: you can lead without character, but you won't be a leader worth following.

If God has gifted you to lead, you *will* lead. My passion is to help equip you to become a leader whose life is marked by qualities that ensure a no-regrets experience for those who choose to follow. Embracing these five essentials will enable you to do just that.

Section One: Competence.

Chapter One: You Are Doing Too Much!

It is both natural and necessary for young leaders to try to prove themselves by doing everything themselves. Natural because, as a leader, you want to set the pace even as you demonstrate that nothing is beneath you. Necessary because most of the time nobody is around to help. But what may be natural and necessary will ultimately limit your effectiveness.

Perhaps the two best-kept secrets of leadership are these:

1. The less you do, the more you accomplish.
2. The less you do, the more you enable others to accomplish.

I am a good communicator. I am not a good manager. I am a good visioncaster. I am not good at follow-up. I know how to prepare a message. I am not good at planning an event.

Yet, early on I did nothing to improve my communication skills. Instead, I spent a lot of time trying to become a better manager and event planner. When it came to communication, I would often wing it because that was the one area where I *could* wing it.

Over time I let others begin to do the things I wasn't good at and didn't enjoy. I found the very activities that drained me actually fueled them—they liked them and were good at them.

Bottom line: Only do what only you can do.

What are the two or three things that you and only you are responsible for? What is "success" for the person in your position? To take it even further—of the things that define success for you, which of those are in line with your giftedness?

That is where you must focus your energies. That is your sweet spot, where you will excel. That is where you will add the most value to your organization. Best of all, you will enjoy what you do.

The moment a leader steps away from his core competencies, his effectiveness diminishes. Worse, the effectiveness of every other leader in the organization suffers too; a leader who isn't leading from the right "zone" will create an unfavorable environment for other leaders.

Given this, why is it so hard to focus on what we do best? I've identified five primary obstacles to a leader adopting this way of thinking:

1. **The Quest for Balance.** The idea that leaders should be balanced or well-rounded looks good on paper, but doesn't work well in reality. We should strive for organizational balance, but not balance within the sphere of our personal leadership abilities. Striving for balance forces a leader to invest time and energy in aspects of leadership where he or she will never excel. Read the biographies of achievers; you will find over and over that they were not well-rounded—they were focused.
2. **Failure to Distinguish Between Authority and Competence.** Every leader has authority over areas they don't have competence in. When we exert our authority in those areas, we mess things up. I have authority over our video control room, but I don't really know the first thing about what goes on in there. If I walk in and start barking out orders, the crew would do what I asked, but the production would suffer horribly.
3. **Inability to Distinguish Between Competencies and Non-Competencies.** Leaders who are successful in one area often assume competency in areas where, in fact, they have none.
4. **Guilt.** Some leaders focus outside of their strengths because they feel guilty delegating their weaknesses. They assume everyone hates doing what they hate doing, when in reality some people love those very things, and are good at them.
5. **Unwillingness to Develop Other Leaders.** Sometimes it really is easier to do it yourself than to train someone else. But, leadership is not always about getting things

done “right.” It’s about getting things done through others, which multiplies both your efforts and your results.

Chapter Two: Doing the Right Things

In Acts chapter 6, a problem with food distribution arose. The apostles had to make a decision about how to take care of the widows. It’s hard for us to imagine the apostles as waiters, but these were the people who watched Jesus wash their feet. They knew about serving others and servant leadership. If the widows needed to be fed, why wouldn’t they do it?

However, at some point the job grew large enough that it consumed much of their time. So, they called a meeting in which Peter said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.” In other words, it would be wrong for the apostles to continue to care for the widows (at least personally).

The apostles were the only men on the planet who could recommunicate the teachings of Jesus. Given that imperative, they had no business waiting on tables. They needed to focus on doing what only they could do.

Three things happened as a result of this realignment: the word of God spread; the number of disciples increased rapidly; key influencers in the city were converted. In addition, two significant leaders (Stephen and Philip) emerged. The work of serving the widows was no less “spiritual” than the apostle’s work, but it wasn’t until the right people were doing the right things that the impact was fully felt.

None of the Twelve had any idea what hung in the balance of their decision to give up waiting tables; they only knew it was the right thing to do. The same is true for you. You have no idea what hangs in the balance of your decision to play to your strengths and delegate your weaknesses.

So the question is, what would “not be right” for you to continue doing?

Chapter 3: Finding Your Groove

There is no necessary correlation between how busy you are and how productive you are. They aren’t the same. The most productive people I know seem to have more discretionary time than the average person, not less.

Studies reveal that 20% of our efforts result in 80% of our effectiveness. This makes it imperative that we discover the 20%. And having discovered it, we must focus more of our time and energy on those activities. Therein lies the key to maximum impact as a leader.

Several years ago I concluded that 80% of my professional productivity flowed from three activities:

1. Corporate visioncasting
2. Corporate communication
3. Leadership development.

With that in mind, I rearranged and reprioritized my schedule. Over 80% of my time is now focused on the three things that only I can do.

The primary reason we do too much is that we have never taken the time to discover the portion of what we do that makes the biggest difference. You must take time for some personal evaluation. Here are a couple of questions that may help you work through this:

1. What do you do that seems almost effortless to you but others view as a daunting task?
2. What do you enjoy most about your current job?
3. What do you do that elicits the most praise and recognition from others?
4. What do you wish you could delegate?

Self-evaluation is a necessary step in discovering your core competencies. However, you also need to get input from other people, since we are never completely objective about ourselves.

Take some time to develop a job description that you think would allow you to focus on your core competencies. Present it to your boss for input. How he or she responds will tell you a lot about your work environment—a good boss will be glad for the opportunity to maximize your contribution by helping you get more aligned.

There are times when you must pitch in and do things outside your core competencies, but they should be chosen carefully, and should be the exception, not the rule. As you move closer to the ideal, you will become more and more valuable to your organization. As you narrow your focus, you will broaden the opportunities for those who have chosen to follow you.

Section Two: Courage

Chapter 4: First In

Leaders love progress. Progress is what keeps them coming back to the task. Progress requires change. If an organization, ministry, or business is going to make progress, it must change. It must become better, more relevant, more disciplined, etc. But organizations, like people, resist change.

It's easier to accept the status quo than promote change. But accepting the status quo is like accepting a death sentence. Where there is no progress, there's no growth. No growth, no life. So, leaders often find themselves in the place of having to draw attention to the need for change. Consequently, courage is a non-negotiable quality for the next generation leader.

Leaders challenge what *is* for the sake of what *could and should* be. That's the job of the leader. But, challenging the status quo requires guts. Simply recognizing the need for change does not make a leader; the leader is the one who has the courage to act on what he sees.

Courage is essential because the first person to step out in a new direction is viewed as the leader. And, being the first to step out requires courage. In this way, *courage establishes leadership*. Note: leaders are not always the first to see an opportunity. They are simply the first to *seize* an opportunity.

Sometimes courage is the willingness to move in spite of emotions and thoughts that oppose you. Courage isn't the absence of fear; courage assumes fear. The leader who refuses to move until the fear is gone will never move. Consequently, he will never lead. There is always uncertainty associated with the future; leadership is about moving boldly into the future in spite of uncertainty and risk.

One of the biggest fears many of us have is the fear of failure. Leaders face that also, but often view failure differently. Here's the difference: *Eventually a leader's lust for progress overwhelms his reluctance to take risks*. In other words, failure to move things forward is the type of failure most feared by the leader.

Leaders know the best way to ensure success is to take chances. While the average man or woman fears *stepping out* into a new opportunity, the leader fears *missing out* on a new opportunity.

You can't lead without taking risks. You won't take risks without courage. Courage is essential to leadership.

Chapter 5: Just A Stone's Throw Away

The story of David and Goliath is a perfect example of the impact of courage. David's leadership was established through his courage—not his talent or even his calling by God. David's talent would never have been discovered apart from his courage.

When faced with Goliath, all of Israel was afraid. Goliath was a huge threat to Israel. However, he was also an opportunity. Wherever there is fear, there is an opportunity. Where there is great fear, there is great opportunity. Leaders see and seize opportunity.

David was courageous, but he wasn't careless. Leaders worth following are always careful, because they genuinely care for those who have chosen to follow. Unfortunately, fear often

disguises itself behind the mask of care. Fearful people often excuse their fear as healthy caution. Next generation leaders need to confront this question honestly: careful or fearful? It's important to know the answer; what you don't know *can* hurt you—and those who follow you.

Chapter 6: Three Expressions of Courage

Leadership requires the courage to challenge what *is* for the sake of what *could be*. I want to give you three specific expressions of courage that often elude leaders.

1. The Courage To Say "No."

The complaint I hear most about young leaders is their inability to focus. A lack of focus eventually translates into a loss of vision. Al Ries, author of the groundbreaking book *Focus*, said this:

"It's been my experience that great leaders, in spite of a multitude of distractions, know how to keep things focused. They don't let side issues overwhelm them."

Often the reason we won't say no is we are afraid of disappointing people, of being passed by, or missing a good opportunity. But, at some point every leader must come to grips with the fact that there will always be more opportunities than there is time to pursue them.

2. The Courage To Face Current Reality

Next generation leaders must also be willing to face current reality. When someone refuses to face reality, we call it denial. We say that person is sick. Organizations, like people, can live in denial.

As leaders we want to believe that things are good. Our ego and self-esteem are often wrapped up in the organization. But, leaders who are worth following are willing to face and embrace current reality regardless of how discouraging or embarrassing it might be. To be that kind of leader you must be relentless in your quest to know the truth about what is happening around you.

Jim Collins says, *"Leadership does not begin with just vision. It begins with getting people to confront the brutal facts and to act on the implications."* Facing reality is often nasty, but always necessary. That's why every successful business turnaround begins with an intense fact-finding mission. You must be willing to face the truth regardless of how painful it might be. And if you don't like what you see, change it.

3. The Courage To Dream

Every great accomplishment began as a dream. You must allow your mind to wander outside the boundaries of what *is* and begin to create a mental picture of what *could be*. But dreaming requires courage, because on the heels of every dream is the demon of doubt. We quickly think of all the reasons it can't work, and question if we are up to the task.

In spite of this, we must forge ahead and dream. I keep a little card on my desk that reads, *Dream no small dreams, for they stir not the hearts of men.* More than once, this simple statement has kept me from retreating from my dreams.

Section Three: Clarity

The art of clarity involves giving explicit and precise direction in spite of limited information and unpredictable outcomes. Imagine for a moment that you are quarterback of a football team. It is fourth and eight. You are six points behind and five minutes remain on the clock. What do you do? Kick or go for it?

With limited information and facing an unpredictable outcome, you do what every quarterback in that situation does: You draw upon your knowledge and intuition and you call a play. You don't shrug your shoulders and send everybody to the line. You make a decision and send everybody into formation with specific instructions. After the play you find out whether you made the right decision.

What you don't do is send everyone to the line without calling a play!

Chapter 7: Leading In The Shadow Of Uncertainty

Where there is no uncertainty, there is no need for leadership. The greater the uncertainty, the greater the need for leadership. It took me several years to figure this out. As a young leader, I was tormented by the assumption that I should know what to do in every situation.

Time and experience have taught me differently. Uncertainty is a permanent part of the leadership landscape. You will consistently be called upon to make decisions with limited information. That being the case, your goal should not be to eliminate uncertainty. Instead, you must develop the art of being clear in the face of uncertainty.

Contrary to what many think, uncertainty actually increases with greater leadership responsibility. The cost of success as a leader is more uncertainty, not less.

Leadership is all about taking people on a journey. The challenge is that most of the time we are asking people to follow us to places we ourselves have never been. This is the tension every good leader lives with: negotiating uncertain terrain while casting a clear and compelling vision. There is always uncertainty. It is my responsibility to bring clarity into the midst of the uncertainty.

Chapter 8: I'll Tell You When We Get There

As leaders we can afford to be uncertain, but we cannot afford to be unclear. People will follow you in spite of a few bad decisions; they will not follow you if you are unclear in your instructions. Neither will they follow if you display a lack of confidence.

The individual in your organization who communicates the clearest vision will often be perceived as the leader. Clarity is perceived as leadership. If you are at the helm of your organization, the application is clear. You must be clear if you are to retain your influence. It isn't enough to be the boss; you must be clear. As you gain clarity, your influence will grow.

Chapter 9: Managing Your Uncertainty

In leadership there is always the temptation to pretend to know more than we really do. We fear that people won't follow us unless we portray the image that we are all-knowing.

Two things happen when we pretend. First, we close ourselves off from the input of others. Second, we expose our insecurity to the people we have asked to follow us. The sharp people will know when you are bluffing. Pretending erodes respect much quicker than an admission of uncertainty. Uncertainty exposes a lack of knowledge. Pretending exposes a lack of character.

So how do you manage your uncertainty? One way is to remember a simple phrase: "I don't know, but I will certainly find out." I will follow a leader who doesn't know but is committed to finding out; so will you. I won't follow a leader who pretends to know and does nothing to quell his ignorance.

Another thing you can do is to seek wise counsel. Leadership is not about making decisions on your own. It is about owning the decisions once you make them. It is no coincidence that Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, wrote more about seeking counsel than any other biblical writer.

Finally, measure your success by the scoreboard, not the playbook. Every good coach goes into the game to win, and goes in with a plan. But every good coach is also willing to scrap the plan in order to win. Leaders, like coaches, are sometimes forced to abandon their plans in order to deliver on the vision. The uncertainty of the landscape will require regular reassessment of your plans. The leader who refuses to revise his plan rarely reaches his destination. *Clarity of vision will compensate for uncertainty in planning.* If you are clear about the destination, you can handle a few detours along the way.

Section Four: Coaching

Chapter 10: Listening, Learning

To be the best next generation leader you can be, you must enlist the help of others. Self-evaluation is helpful, but evaluation from someone else is essential. You need a leadership coach.

We have a tendency to measure ourselves against the people around us. They become our point of reference. A good coach will evaluate your performance against your potential; against *your* strengths, not someone else's.

A coach is different from a counselor, consultant, or mentor. A counselor helps resolve past issues to operate more in the present. A coach helps us assess the present so that we can operate more effectively in the future. A consultant is typically engaged for a short time to solve a specific problem; coaching is typically a medium- to long-term prospect, focused on performance enhancement.

Coaching encompasses all the components of a mentoring relationship, and more. The biggest difference is that in a coaching relationship, the coach takes more initiative about when and how information is passed along.

As valuable and important as it is for anyone who wants to develop to their fullest potential, there is something in many of us that resists being coached in the realm of leadership. We'll receive it for our golf game more readily than for our leadership. Maybe it's the way leaders are wired; maybe it's pride. Whatever it is, it can undercut us if we let it.

Chapter 11: The King Who Wouldn't Listen

Great leaders are great learners. But learning assumes an attitude of submission. Engaging a leadership coach requires a willingness on the part of a leader to submit to the counsel and instruction of others. *If you are not teachable, you are not coachable.*

Solomon valued receiving counsel; Solomon's son Rehoboam didn't follow in his dad's footsteps in this area. I Kings 12 describes a situation where he sought advice from his father's advisors as to how to begin his reign as king. They advised him to serve the people, and if he did, he would have their hearts forever. However, Rehoboam chose not to follow their advice. Instead, he decided to show the people how "powerful" he was...and lost them.

Here is where the power of coaching could have made a difference. Had he listened to Solomon's advisers, he would have gone farther as a king, faster. He would have led his kingdom beyond his natural ability and maturity. Unfortunately, that's not what happened.

Rehoboam assumed something that many leaders wrongly assume. He assumed that his position alone would ensure the loyalty of the people. He wasn't mature enough to understand that every follower is a volunteer. Generally speaking, people don't follow rulers. They follow *leaders*.

I have more in common with Rehoboam than I would like to admit. Chances are, you do too. When I make up my mind about something, I don't really want anyone telling me it is not a good idea. Every leader I know leans in that direction. So God, in his wisdom, has placed men and women around us with the experience and discernment we often lack.

If we are wise enough to listen, they will help us go farther, faster.

Chapter 12: What Coaches Do

So what exactly does a leadership coach do? Three things. An effective leadership coach:

1. Observes
2. Instructs
3. Inspires

It's just about impossible to help someone become a better performer if you never actually see him perform. The person or people you invite into the role of coach must be in a position to watch you lead. This idea may be intimidating, but think about it: people watch you all the time. Leadership is a public activity.

Good leadership coaches are also teachers. They will give you insight into *what* to do, *how* to do it, and *why* to do it.

The third component of a good coach is inspiration. A good coach will be able to instill in you a mental image of what could and should be true of you as a leader. He'll point you towards a preferred future and inspire you to pursue it.

As important as it is, engaging a good coach is difficult, for two reasons. First, most people won't even know what you are talking about if you ask them to coach you. Second, qualified candidates will tell you they aren't qualified.

So here's what you do: don't ask anyone to coach you. That will scare them off. Instead, ask them to evaluate a particular aspect of your leadership. The important thing here is to be specific. For example, ask them how to improve the way you run your meetings. Invite them to come, observe, and give you suggestions as to how to improve.

You haven't asked them for a long-term coaching relationship. You have simply asked for input. If your evaluation time with this person proves beneficial and enjoyable, chances are you have found a coach.

As a leader, what you don't know can hurt you. What you don't know about yourself can put a lid on your leadership. You owe it to yourself and to those who follow you to open the doors to evaluation and input. Engage a coach.

Section Five: Character

Chapter 13: A Nonessential

Let's begin this final section with a reality check: Character is *not* essential to leadership. We all know of leaders who have led large organizations and garnered the loyalty of many followers, and yet lacked character.

You *can* lead without character. But character is what makes you a leader worth following. Your accomplishments as a leader will make your name known. Your character will determine what people associate with your name.

Those who choose to follow you want you to be a leader worth following. They will judge you not so much for where you led them, but how you led them. Their stories will always include their personal estimation of you as a person, not just your leadership skills. The truth is that those who choose to follow you will expect more from you by way of character than they expect from themselves.

Character involves doing what is right because it's the right thing to do—regardless of the cost. And it's those last few words that divide the men and women of character from those with good but negotiable intentions.

The day will come when progress seems to call for a compromise of conviction. The leader in you will want to push forward; the end will seem to justify the means. The good news is that in most cases there are other paths you can take. But they are generally longer, steeper, and more expensive. Nobody likes to detour, especially leaders. But what hangs in the balance is worth the delay.

What hangs in the balance is far more valuable to you as a leader than progress. What hangs in the balance is your *moral authority*.

Every leader wears two badges: one visible, one invisible. The visible badge is your position and title. The invisible badge is your moral authority. Your position gives you authority within a certain context, i.e. your office. Your moral authority, however, gives you influence in a variety of contexts. Your position will prompt people to lend you their hands; your moral authority will inspire them to lend you their hearts.

Moral authority is established once it becomes clear to those who are watching that progress, financial reward, and recognition are not a leader's gods. When they see that there are some things you are not willing to sacrifice at the altar of "success" you will have moral authority in their eyes.

Moral authority comes when people see that you walk your talk; when there is alignment between conviction, action, belief, and behavior. We will not allow ourselves to be influenced

by men and women who lack moral authority. Inconsistency between what is said and done inflicts a mortal wound on a leader's influence.

You can tell yourself all day that how you conduct your life away from the office is nobody's business. But don't be deceived: if there is a perceived difference between what you expect from others and what you expect from yourself, it will eventually erode your influence.

Chapter 14: The King Who Followed

Everyone loves a story about a hero who chooses to stand alone against injustice. When we hear of men and women doing the right thing at the risk of losing what's most precious to them, something happens in our hearts. Not only do we want them to win in the end, we want to know that, if faced with the same dilemma, we would follow their example.

There will come a time in your leadership when your character will be tested. You will have an opportunity to be the hero. The opportunity will take you by surprise, and in the heat of the moment you will be unaware of all that is at stake. But if you do what is right, it will be a defining moment for you as a leader.

To be an authentic test of character, it will be a situation in which the outcome will be completely out of your control. You will simply make your choice and face the consequences. If you make the right decision, you will find a level of freedom that you didn't know existed.

Chapter 15: The Leader Worth Following

Your talent and giftedness as a leader have the potential to take you farther than your character can sustain you. That ought to scare you.

The fact that people choose to follow you is not necessarily an indicator that you deserve to be followed. There is a big difference between having a following and being worth following.

There is always a temptation to look at someone and judge the amount of God's blessing upon his life based upon the number of people who have chosen to follow him. But if numbers tell the whole story, we would have to assume that God removed His blessing from Jesus toward the end of His ministry.

To become a leader worth following, you must give time and attention to the inner man. To leave a legacy that goes beyond accomplishments, a leader must devote himself to matters of the heart.

How do you do that? First, begin at the end. Second, make your convictions public.

As a leader you probably know what you want to do; have you also determined what you want to *become*? Your doing will flow from who you are. Character development always begins with the end in mind. What do you want to be remembered for?

Once you have determined what you want to be, tell somebody. Go public with your intentions. Letting others in on who you want to be reinforces the goal. When you know that others know the value you place on something, it is powerful incentive to keep yourself within your boundaries.

You owe it to those who follow you to develop your character. Leaders who refuse to make developing their characters a priority generally end up with organizations that reflect that deficit as well.

Epilogue

If you embrace and internalize these five essentials, you will have the foundation you need to leverage the opportunities God brings your way. Ignore any of these five, and you will expend an inordinate measure of energy with less progress to show for it.



From the Pastor's Perspective

I love this book! Stanley always brings a different slant and fresh insights to the table, especially when talking about leadership. His five essentials are different from what you find in the typical leadership books—he doesn't focus on vision—but they are incredibly practical and helpful.

I was particularly struck by the chapters on Competence, Clarity, and Coaching.

Regarding competence, I have always thought that as a leader I should focus on what I am best at. Reading Stanley's thoughts on it and comparing to how I actually live, I realize I can do much better. I have agreed with the idea, but I haven't been diligent about evaluating "what can only I do" and focusing my energies there. I find I easily fall into thinking that it is

a burden for me to ask others to take things on that I don't like because I assume they won't like them either. I've been proven wrong on this many times, but I still fall into it.

I also appreciated his insights on the importance of clarity- The ability to meaningfully direct in the midst of uncertainty brings leadership to a different level. As a teacher, I associate clarity with giving people specific applications and actions to take; as a leader, it's linked to very specific job descriptions, goals, or assignments. When people know what is expected or where they are going, they are much more able to move forward with confidence.

I think I have resisted being clear at times because I feared it could seem harsh or graceless, or even legalistic. I've also linked clarity (emotionally) with things being set in stone and unchangeable. However, I have seen the difference, in practice, that clarity makes for people; it is very liberating. Ambiguity is paralyzing; clarity is empowering. For me, this is a growth area.

The chapter on Coaching was a big surprise, only because Stanley includes it as one of his five "essentials" of leadership development, and argues for its importance quite persuasively. I have benefitted greatly from having coaches, so I don't know why I was surprised, but I just never made the connection until he spelled it out.

By the way, if you are looking for a coach, I have had the benefit of being coached by two different men, Kirk Kirlin and Dave Jacobs. Both of them have been a tremendous blessing to me and have taught me a lot. If you are looking for a coach, I highly recommend you check out these two guys and see if one is a good fit for you. Both have been pastors in different settings and have been effective coaches for numerous people both in and out of the ministry. You can reach them via their websites:

Kirk Kirlin: www.kirlincoaching.com

Dave Jacobs: www.smallchurchpastor.com

Tell them I said hello!