

# Authentic Servant Leadership

By Angela Contrada



## 12 LEADERSHIP LESSONS

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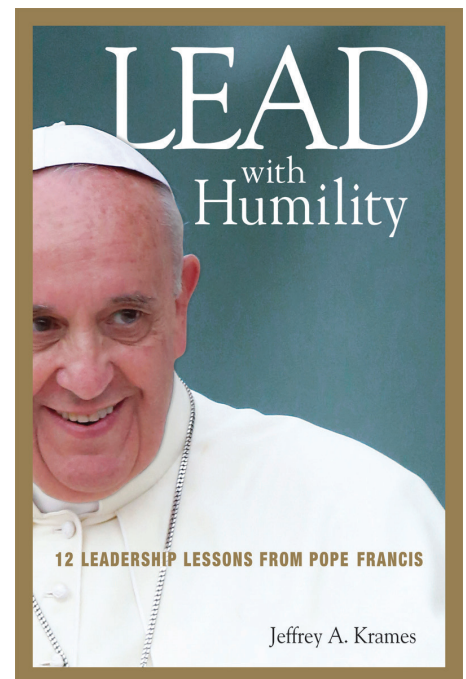
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## Lead with Humility: 12 Leadership Lessons from Pope Francis

By Jeffrey A. Krames

*“Aspiring leaders and students of leadership will find much to learn from this unique man, lessons that can be applied to all walks of life, but especially to business, but more specifically to leadership” (p. 3)*

In **Lead with Humility: 12 Leadership Lessons from Pope Francis**, Jeffery A. Krames demonstrates Pope Francis’ power, rooted in humility and how anyone who aspires to lead, can learn a lot by looking at the pontiff’s actions. Krames’ interpretation of the pope’s servant-leadership is based on the words and actions of the former Argentinean Bishop and current Pope. He focuses on the value the pontiff places on respect, dignity and humanity and how authentic dialogue is the key in creating meaningful change. While the idea of humility may seem paradoxical in leadership, and viewed as a sign of weakness, Pope Francis has demonstrated time and again that by placing the needs of other before his own, the served grow as individuals and become themselves servants.



# LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM POPE FRANCIS

*“Leadership is not about perfection; it is about espousing a new vision and getting others to live that vision” (p. 1)*

*“[I]mmersing yourself deeply in whatever group you lead or aspire to lead, and in a meaningful way” (p. 15)*

*“As a leader, you must be sure to leave at the door any biases that you may have against anyone or any group under your leadership” (p. 29)*

## Lead with Humility

In an attempt to make the church more inclusive and an effective agent of change, Pope Francis demonstrates authentic leadership in the values he places in achieving this vision. He emphasizes innovation, inclusion, communication, listening and counseling and recognizes that mistakes will be made along the way, but it is through adversity individuals grow and learn.

## Smell Like Your Flock

The Bishop of the Slums, Jorge Mario Bergoglio spent years in the slums of Buenos Aires as a defender of the least fortunate. His dialogue with the disenfranchised was a way to increase the Church’s involvement in the poorest parts of his jurisdiction. Bergoglio visited the slums regularly and worked with the poor, many of them youths addicted to a type of cocaine called paco. He shared tea with them, listened to them and helped them rehabilitate.

In order to gain insight on the inner workings of a department and smell like one’s flock, a leader needs to consider their followers’ perspectives, by spending a day doing someone else’s job and to Manage by Walking Around. A popular technique used by Bill Hewlett, David Packard and Steve Jobs, by making MBWA a regular occurrence, a leader gains understanding into the morale of their followers. It is a great way to create dialogue and ask people within the organization for suggestions and ideas on how to improve. These methods give leaders the opportunity to better understand the needs and issues of the organization on different levels.

## Who Am I to Judge? Judging versus Assessing

Pope Francis places great emphasis on the importance on listening, understanding and helping. By listening to others, leaders gain new perspectives and learn their followers’ needs, goals and strengths. Listening opens conversation and creates sincere dialogue. Assessment occurs on a regular basis, both formally and informally and involves consultation with others. Through dialogue and ongoing assessment, leaders ensure individuals are in the right job, can identify their strengths, and empower them to develop and grow.

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*“[P]eople first and everything else second” (p. 24)*

*“The first reform must be the attitude” (p. 42)*

*“The idea behind not-invented here syndrome (NHI) is the attitude “[i]f we did not invent it, then it is not worth looking into – or knowing about it”” (p. 50)*

*“The Pope sees things exactly as they are and not how he wishes them to be.” (p. 59)*

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## Don't Change - Reinvent

Leaders need followers who are willing to do what is for the greater good and to not only look out for themselves. This is, after all, the motivation behind of servant leadership. There is no room for self-serving individuals who only look out for themselves. Change cannot happen by looking inward. In order to remain relevant, leaders and followers need to change to adapt to the changes in the world. “Just because your company has done something one way for years, doesn't mean it still works today” (p.38)

## Make Inclusion a Top Priority

One of Pope Francis' missions has been inclusion and consultation with others. Key to creating authentic dialogue, leaders need to make their organizations as inclusive as possible by ensuring that everyone is attended to. They need to avoid yes-men and surround themselves with a variety of people that have different experiences, capabilities and perspectives. This diversity allows the leader to gain new awareness and viewpoints that he or she may have not considered.

## Avoid Insularity

Leaders are human, vulnerable, and at times filled with doubt. It is through this darkness that one grows as both a human and a leader. These individuals are more humble, and more likely to reach out for help when it is needed. It is dangerous and counter intuitive to be too inward. Essential to true dialogue, and key to avoid NHI is for the leader to consult with a variety of individuals, both inside and outside the organization, who have different perspectives than his or her own. This diversity and working with others is important to achieving goals.

## Choose Pragmatism over Ideology

Francis understands that the world is rapidly changing and evolving and as a result, there needs to be changes in parts of Church doctrine. He has, and continues to push the envelope, because the only way to accomplish his goal of inclusiveness is to go beyond the limits. Similarly, leaders need to be pragmatic, need to go beyond the call of duty and live on the frontier to adapt to and cause change.



Jeffrey A. Krames

*“A truly successful leader continually evaluates his or her decisions and makes adjustments as needed.” (p. 73)*

*“It is always the people and their wounds that come first” (p. 75)*

*“Wake up the world! Be witness of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world” (p.81)*

*“To be a leader of the magnitude of Pope Francis, you have to recognize that sometimes you will falter, and that mistakes are acceptable as long as they can contribute to future triumphs” (p. 90)*

## The Optics of Decision Making

In order to succeed, leaders need to make decisions that advance their plans and goals. They consider various outcomes, make people a top priority, are in a continual conversation and seek feedback from trusted individuals.

## Run Your Organization Like a Field Hospital

Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of the leader’s responsibility to tend to the members of his or her flock and do what is needed to help them grow. This is achieved by nurturing them, keeping communication and dialogue open, and by having an open-door policy. The focus is to allow followers to make decisions and for a leader, to be ready to give support when asked or needed.

## Live on the Frontier

Leaders must forget themselves and consider what their followers need at that moment. There needs to be a change in attitude where the wants of the organization take precedence over the leader’s own personal desires. Often, this requires leaders to get to the frontier, or get out of their comfort zone. By modeling this behavior, others will follow the example.

## Confront Adversity Head-On

Set backs are a part of learning and can have positive outcomes. Leaders can turn adversity into an asset by gaining new perspective and independence. It is important to tackle problems head-on, root out problems immediately and not to sidestep. Being proactive helps filter out larger problems in the long run.

## Pay Attention to Non-Customers

The changes Pope Francis has promoted are not only for his followers, but also for those who have turned away from the church and non-Catholics. Similarly, a leader needs to look at their vision and identify what is important to them to achieve their goals. Through ongoing assessment and communication, servants meet their followers’ needs and together they achieve a common goal. In this process, those who are served are empowered and grow and in turn become servants.

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# Questions to consider to “smell like your flock”, the Francis way:

## QUESTIONS

- Have you removed barriers that set you above your followers?
- Do you feel you know the strengths and weakness of each of your followers?
- How often do you manage by walking or work with your followers to gain insight and perspective?
- When engaging in dialogue, do you listen and involve your followers in a true two-way conversation?
- In what ways do you focus on and empower your followers' strengths? How often do you assess?
- Are all individuals, leaders and followers, willing to do what is for the greater good or is there self-interest?
- Have you surrounded yourself with individuals who are not afraid to tell you the truth?
- Do you see the world for what it is? Do you experiment with new ideas and push yourself for new challenges?
- Are you followers your priority?
- How do you look for growth in adversity? What lessons can be learned through experiencing hardships?
- Do you have an open door policy where anyone in need of care can visit with you?
- In what ways do you encourage your team to follow your example?
- How has your leadership been mirrored in your followers' actions?



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# EVALUATION

*Lead with Humility: 12 Leadership Lessons from Pope Francis* is an insightful book that demonstrates at how individuals can learn to be authentic leaders by looking at the actions of servant leaders.

The lessons outlined in this text are both accessible and applicable for individuals in leadership positions and those aspiring to lead. Leading with humility is a behaviour that can be learned. Through the examples of the Pope's servant-leadership, Krames demonstrates that the key to Francis' success lies in the importance he places in authentic dialogue. In each of the twelve lessons, the unifying idea is that through conversation, leaders learn the strengths and needs of their followers and promote change, all while creating an inclusive, nurturing environment.

***“Leadership is the ability to articulate a vision and get others to carry it out” (Krames, 2014)***

One criticism is that at times, the lessons are more

business than leadership orientated. The idea of paying attention to non-customers has more application to the business world than to the context of leadership outlined here. Pope Francis reaches out to those who have turned away from the church by modernizing their outreach (via social media for example) while companies explore how they can expand business by branching out. Within the context of servant leadership, a connection can be made with the vision of the leaders and their methods of achieving goals. Servants meet their followers' needs, together they achieve a common goal, and in turn those served become servants.

As an educator, I recommend this book to both experienced teachers and administrators. Reflecting on one's practice is essential for growth. This text provides examples that encourage individuals to look at and evaluate their practice and how they lead with humility. The underlying message in each lesson is the value placed on inclusion, empathy and respect, all ideals that foster a nurturing environment of growth and change. I encourage anyone in any leadership capacity to read this book as a means of reflecting on their humility.

*“There are many barriers in everyday life that impede dialogue: misinformation, gossip, prejudices, defamation, and slander. All of these realities make up certain cultural sensationalism that drowns out any possibility of openness to others. Thus, dialogue and encounter falter”*  
(p. 44)

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

**Leadership Takes Humility - Tim Westergren**, cofounder of Pandora, believes that the most effective leaders are humble; they learn by doing. <https://hbr.org/video/2363593483001/leadership-takes-humility>

**Heroic to Humble - How to be a Better Leader: Jeremy Cross at TEDxStHelier** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmL9nOi-DMQ>

**The Best Leaders are Humble Leaders**  
<https://hbr.org/2014/05/the-best-leaders-are-humble-leaders>

**Management by Walking Around: 6 Tips to Make it Work**  
<http://fortune.com/2012/08/23/management-by-walking-around-6-tips-to-make-it-work/>

## REFERENCES

Krames, Jeffrey A. (2014). *Lead with Humility: 12 Leadership Lessons From Pope Francis*. [Kindle]. Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com/Lead-Humility-Leadership-Lessons-Francis-ebook/dp/B00KVO2C6A/>

Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and Practice (7th ed.)* [Kindle]. Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com/Leadership-Practice-Peter-G-Northouse-ebook/dp/B00TKEOIVE/>

*“Only by acknowledging the problem can one begin to create steps to overcome it” (p. 93)*

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