

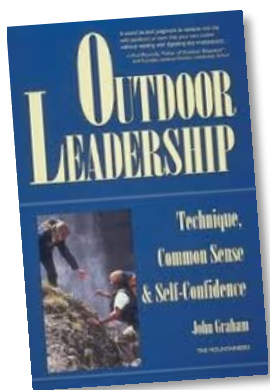
OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP

Technique, Common Sense & Self Confidence

“If nothing else, consider leadership training to be a smart insurance policy” (Graham, 1997)

Leading in the outdoors is much like leading from behind a desk. One must be good planner, conflict resolver, and decision maker. However, unlike a mistake in the office, a leadership mistake in the outdoors maybe more hazardous to your health.

John Graham is both an outdoor enthusiast and a leadership enthusiast. He uses his experience as an officer with the U.S. Foreign Service and Executive Director of the Giraffe Project to provide insight about good and bad leadership. His love of the outdoors helps deliver a common sense look at what is needed when leading groups in nature.



Not Just Another Leadership Book!

Leadership in any given circumstance requires a number of base skills. Some of these are considered

Hard Edged: planning, technical knowledge, and conflict resolution. Others are termed **Soft Edged:** trust, intuition, and inspiration. In the book *Outdoor Leadership*, the author, John Graham,

identifies several of these skills needed when providing leadership in the outdoors. Using personal experiences as a platform to deconstruct hard and soft based skills, Graham’s analysis helps the reader understand why these skills are crucial and then provides easy ways to apply them in your everyday leadership regime.



Author of *Outdoor Leadership*, John Graham is the director of Giraffe Heroes Project



GHP is a non-profit organization that moves people to make a change in their world by sticking their neck out.

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CONTENT

annotated presentation of content and structure

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KEY CONCEPTS

The author keeps it simple

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CRITICAL EVALUATION

and some thought provoking questions

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IN THEORY

all sounds good in practice but in theory?

Content and Structure

The book is organized into fifteen chapters each dedicated to either hard edged leader skills, soft edged leader skills or specific leadership topics such as leadership styles and women in leadership. John Graham considers hard edged skills as the technical or logical aspect of leadership whereas soft edged skills are more intuitive and require internal perspectives. For simplicity sake, I have categorized the chapters into three areas: Hard Edged Skills, Soft Edged Skill, and Leadership Topics.

Table 1- Topic Index by Chapter

	Hard Edged Skill	Soft Edged Skill	Leadership Topics
Chapter 1- What is Leadership?			✓
Chapter 2- Attitudes		✓	
Chapter 3- Getting Ready	✓		
Chapter 4- Leadership Styles			✓
Chapter 5- Women in Leadership			✓
Chapter 6- Making Good Decisions	✓	✓	
Chapter 7- Caring Leadership		✓	
Chapter 8- Taking Responsibility			✓
Chapter 9- Communicating Effectively		✓	
Chapter 10- Courage		✓	
Chapter 11- Team Building: Visionary Leadership	✓		
Chapter 12- Resolving Conflicts	✓		
Chapter 13- Dealing With Stress	✓		
Chapter 14- Organizational Leadership			✓
Chapter 15- Political Leadership			✓

PERSPECTIVE WITH CLOUT

Thoughtful words from some of the world’s foremost leaders in outdoor guiding permeate the book. Each of these snippets provide an inside look of what ought to be prepared when planning trips in the outdoors.

Teams work when there’s a shared vision and, from that, shared objectives, strategy, philosophy, and style. On the 1986 Everest West Ridge Expedition, we started, in many ways, as a very mixed bag of thirteen individuals. But each of us was chosen because we had a record of being a good team player. Once we had a core of five, it took a consensus of all team members to add each of the next eight.

The expedition leader asked each one of us three questions: Why are you here? What strengths do you bring? What could you get out of this, whether or not you get to the top? Initially these questions seemed strange. But asking and answering questions such as these built a strong common thread, a strong philosophical base. It showed respect for all members. It recognized everybody’s strengths. I felt like a valuable, contributing member of the group from then on.

—Sharon Wood, Adventure Dynamics, first North American woman to summit on Everest

Key Concepts

Although the book is peppered with suggestions for good leadership, the four key concepts are frequently referenced and stated in the very first chapter. The quotes below summarize the authors key message.

“Everyone can be a competent leader”

“What most often separates good leadership from bad, in my experience, is the competence in the so-called soft-edged skills”

“Leadership is not a science to be picked up in one book or course, but an art to be learned over time.”

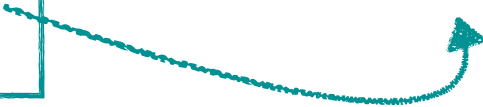
“The guidance in this book applies to leadership in any situation.”

Each chapter ends with a checklist of considerations, “Learning to Lead”. These primary concepts work to reinforce the key concepts of the book.

LEARNING TO LEAD

Team Building: Visionary Leadership

- ❑ A good team coordinates the contributions of its members so that their total effort will be more than the sum of what each of them could do alone.
- ❑ Choose team members with care.
- ❑ Reach early agreement on your team’s goals—and contingency plans if those goals prove out of reach.
- ❑ **Honor differences.** Find the best possible ways the different attributes of team members can complement each other. On a good team, contrary opinions become assets rather than liabilities.
- ❑ **Delegate authority.** When people feel they are integral parts of the action, their commitment to the enterprise, and to the team, grows.
- ❑ **Create a team bond through building trust.** The most important factor in building trust is caring for the people you’re with.
- ❑ **Recognize potential problems early** so you can take remedial action to minimize the chances for real problems later on.
- ❑ **Create and communicate a vision of success**—a clear, concrete picture of intended results.
 - *Visions and team building.* The most dramatic power of visions is in building and leading teams—in catalyzing, guiding, coordinating, and encouraging groups of people to take on difficult and complex challenges.
 - *Creating a vision: essential qualities.* To succeed, a vision must:
 - be clear and concrete;
 - be positive;
 - include a clear picture of the power and impact of your own role;
 - be open to the contributions of others; and
 - come from the heart.
 - *Anyone can create and communicate a vision.* Start with something small, then move to larger and more important projects as you gain confidence.



OPTION 1: Cross on the Log					
Risks	P	RI	Wt	Benefits	P RI Wt
Someone might fall off and get hurt	3	3	= 9	Gets you across the stream	3 x 3 = 9
Someone might panic	1	2	= 2		
Total			11		Total 9

OPTION 2: Take Alternative Log					
Risks	P	RI	Wt	Benefits	P RI Wt
Nasty bushwhack	3	2	= 6	Gets you across the stream	3 x 3 = 9
Someone might fall off and get hurt	1	3	= 3		
Creates a 30-minute delay	3	1	= 3		
Total			12		Total 9

OPTION 3: Wade Across					
Risks	P	RI	Wt	Benefits	P RI Wt
Someone might fall down in the stream	1	2	= 2	Gets you across the stream	3 x 3 = 9
Someone might panic	1	2	= 2	Relatively safe, adventurous, and pleasant experience	2 x 2 = 4
Creates a 45-minute delay	3	1	= 3		
Total			7		Total 13

PRACTICAL TOOLS

Reference aids such as the Probability Of Risk chart, supports the authors key concept that anyone can be a competent leader but it is also quick to point out that hard edged skills are just a small part of good leadership and need to be complimented with the soft edged skills.

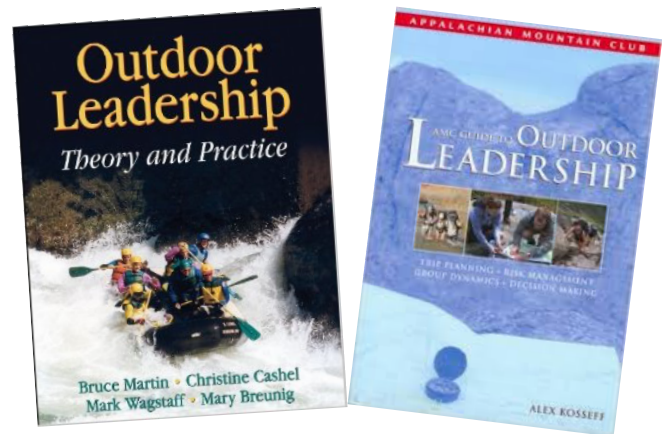
Critical Evaluation

John Graham's book, *Outdoor Leadership*, is a simple reflective monograph written in response to years of guiding outdoor trips. Written partly as a journal entry and partly as an outdoor leadership guide for dummies, Graham acknowledges "the ideas in this book have been circling in my head for years" (Graham, p. 8). Whether you are a new to leading in the outdoors or a seasoned veteran who has led hundreds of trips, the aim of this book is to build and reinforce practical knowledge in outdoor leadership.

"Nothing in it is untested theory"

However, many of his observations lack the research data to back up their claim. Nowhere in the book does the author cite external resources or comments made regarding a certain issue. Furthermore, sections of the book are outdated and need revision. For example, a chapter is devoted to Women in Leadership. Today, a chapter like this would be irrelevant because women are equal participants in outdoor leadership. Nevertheless, for anyone who wants to be an outdoor leader, this is a good place to start your learning as it reiterates that leadership is not a final destination and that there is always room for improvement.

If you are really keen on *Outdoor Leadership*, have a look at these suggested books:



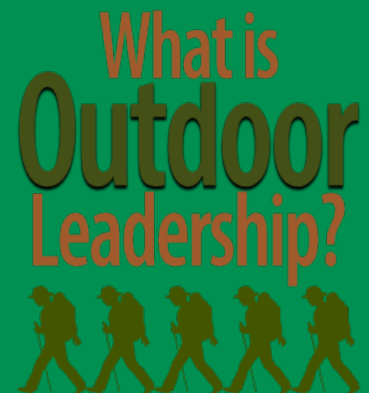
Unfortunately, there is not a great selection of Canadian *Outdoor Leadership* books.

EXCELLENT QUESTIONS!

How can you improve soft edged skills?

Is leading in the outdoors the same as leading in an organization?

Can anyone be a leader in the outdoors?



Applying Practice To Theory

Are the experiences exposed in the book supported by leadership theory? Since the book addresses several different aspects of outdoor leadership, I will use a few chapters as examples to support the assumptions presented are founded in theory. Interestingly, Outdoor Leadership was first written in 1996, before many of the leadership models had been conceptualized in concrete research.

Hard Edged Skills	Leadership Theory Application
Chapter 3-Getting Ready, Chapter 12- Resolving Conflict, Chapter 6- Making Good Decisions	Skills Model- because the emphasis in these chapters is on the logical pre trip planning, the ability to be innovative when faced with an ill defined problem and the systematic thinking required in decision making, they are best described by this approach.
Chapter 11- Team Building	Team Leadership- one of the concepts of team building include recognition of follower strengths and coordinating those strengths with other team members. This aligns with the Team Leadership model of external environmental actions individuals implement to improve the overall group function.
Soft Edged Skills	Leadership Theory Application
Chapter 2-Attitudes	Behavioural Approach- the premise that a leader must see themselves as a leader and know why they lead fits very well with Blake and Mouton’s Leadership Grid.
Chapter 7- Caring Leadership	Servant Leadership- this chapter speaks directly to the theory behind servant leadership. a Caring Leader is one who wants to help followers learn and grow. This chapter also refers to the the ten characteristics of a servant leadership model: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, etc.
Chapter 9- Communicating Effectively	Psychodynamic Approach- although it could be argued that communication is the cornerstone to all leadership models, it does have good foundation in the <i>leadership archetype</i> introduced through the psychodynamic approach which recognizes “the communicator” as one of the dominant leadership behaviours.
Chapter 10- Courage	Adaptive Leadership- courage is the ability to stick your neck out to make change. An adaptive leader would recognize this as an adaptive challenge whereby the behaviours shown by the leader will be critical to the followers ability to make change happen.
Leadership Topics	Leadership Theory Application
Chapter 14- Organizational Leadership, Chapter 15- Political Leadership	These two chapters are viewed more as a frame from which leadership theory can exist. They speak more to the definition of Leadership, “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals towards a common goal” (Northouse, 2016, p. 6), rather than to the theories that make up leadership.

