

The Leadership Odyssey:

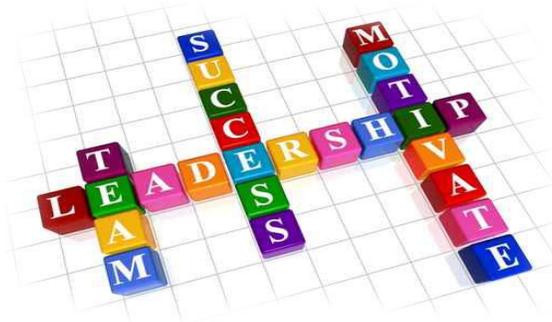
A Self-Development Guide to New Skills for New Times

Executive Book Summary Compiled by Kevin Kermack

About the Authors:

The Leadership Odyssey is written through the combined efforts of Carole Napolitano and Lida Henderson, both of whom are experts in the area of leadership. Known for her affiliation with the Center of Creative Learning and as an instructor for several management programs with the University of Maryland National Leadership Institute, Napolitano in addition holds an English degree. Henderson holds a psychology degree with a masters in counselling, which she uses to develop and implement management and personal development training programs. The experience both women share is quite prominent in this book.

Creativity, unity, and personal development are at the fore front of this book. Napolitano's background in creative leadership combined with Henderson's counselling and personal development background are the ground work for the ideas presented here. If one were to follow all of the advice and self-development techniques shared in this book, as a leader, he or she would be successful, motivating, and able to form a fully functional team.

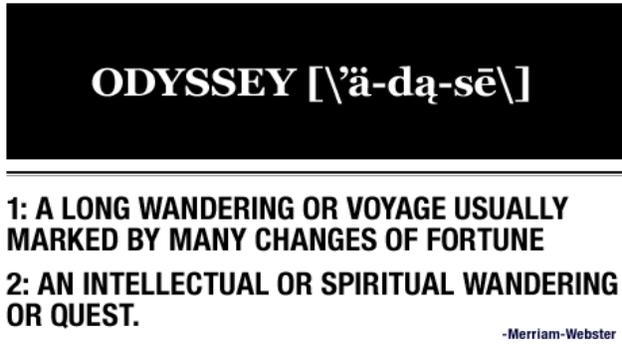


Significant Quotes:

- *"I find the great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving"*
-Oliver Holmes (p. 1)
- *"It is not failure to fall short of realizing a dream...The failure is to fall short of dreaming all that we might realize"*
-Dee Hok(p.14)
- *"The leader's job is to energetically mirror back to the institution how it best thinks of itself."*
-Donald Kennedy (p.65)
- *"Few men are wise to prefer useful criticism to treacherous praise"*
-La Rochefoucauld (p.87)
- *"We must learn how to see the company as a living system..."*
-Phil Carroll (p.111)
- *"Learning is not attained by chance; it must be sought for with adoration and attended to with diligence"*
-Abigail Adams (p.207)

Break Down of the Book:

The book itself is broken down into three separate parts. With the majority of the starting sections, there is an accompanying quote from an experienced leader, past or present.



Part One:

The first part is broken down into three segments, self-leadership, people leadership, and organizational leadership, each a variety of leadership attributes. In all three sections the reader goes through how each attribute is broken down and, on occasion, case studies. Self-leadership involves looking into how one's own values and perspectives impact one's ability to lead. People leadership extends the readers to look beyond them to now deal with how to manage and relate to your followers. Organizational leadership shows the reader how to create a distinct culture and look towards the future once you have a firm base of followers.

Self-Leadership -> People Leadership -> Organizational Leadership

It makes sense what the authors are doing here. To be an effective leader, one must be able to know oneself, then those around them, and finally deal with how you will organize them. I believe it is essential to follow this practice of going from the inside to the outside.

Part Two:

This contains a series of assessment kits to so the reader can be assessed by themselves and others. The kit is based off of what the attributes of leadership the reader learned in part one and how to interpret the feedback from the kit itself.

Part Three:

Once you have the feedback from part two, here are a series of developmental exercises to use in addressing weaknesses and strengths discovered from the assessment kit.

Beginning the Odyssey with Oneself (Part One)

Part One

Self-Leadership

Values: Quality of Being

- Vision
- Integrity
- Passion and Courage
- Optimism and Self-Confidence
- Focus and Discipline
- Flexibility
- Tenacity and Resourcefulness
- Humanity
- Self-Renewal
- Balance

Perspectives:

Habits of Mind

- Embraces Change
- Test Assumptions
- Shifts Paradigms
- Thinks Holistically
- Tolerates Ambiguity and Paradox
- Trusts Intuition
- Takes Risks
- Seeks Synergies
- Models Values

Values:

First things first on your journey to becoming a leader...**Get to know yourself.**

What is your passion, your moral boundaries, your limitations...in essence your values.

Perspectives:

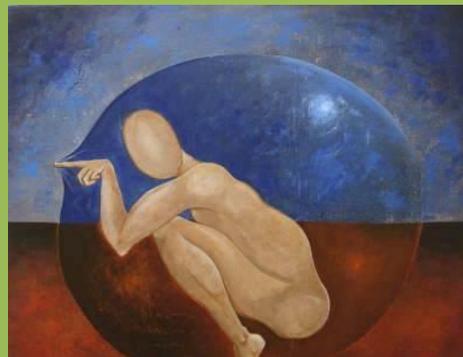
Next we go from understanding who you are on the inside, we now examine how you react in the real world and changes in your life...or in other words, **Understand your reactions.**

How well do you embrace change, trust others, take risks, and continue to model your values in your behaviours?

It is your values and perspectives that make up who are as a leader. It is essential to know who you in order to know who you will react to others and challenges you will have to overcome.

Questions for the Reader (Look to the image at the bottom)

- What do you see?
- Compared to the list of values, how would you rate the person in the image as being strong or weak when compared to each listed item?
- How well do you think the person accepts change or takes risks? Why or why not?
- Is this person a strong leader in your mind? Why or why not?



The Companions on the Odyssey (Part One)

What is a leader without a flock? This is where we begin looking from inside of ourselves to the outside world and the people we interact with. Both Napolitano and Henderson call for a change in the traditional relationship that many leaders and managers with their people. Instead of the traditional model, which commands for managers to have direct control of their followers, the authors strive for a structure that is more supportive to the individual and team performances.



The authors recommend that leaders create a partnership to foster personal and professional empowerment, which would increase the contribution of the followers. The best way to do this is by creating an environment that is consistent, but allows for creativity, which done through the company's vision statement; a vision statement that is linear enough for consistency but leaves room for creativity. In addition, to also empower followers, leaders should create more access to information. A follower is only as strong as the information and knowledge passed down from the leader. Similar to how a master craftsman is only as capable as the tools given to him, a follower is only as capable as the knowledge and information passed down from the leader.

Once the followers are empowered, it is time to foster a strong community:

- Keep vision clear and front and center
- Create business conversations
- Room for creativity but the boundaries are clear
- Provide and Seek Feedback. Let people know what is working and what isn't working
- Follow up the input given and take it serious
- Remove barriers that stop people from communicating
- Reinforce desired behaviours
- Encourage individual and collective thinking

Part One (con't)

People Leadership

Enabling Individuals and Teams to Perform

- Sets Perimeters
- Re-Presents Organization
- Expands Access to Information and New Knowledge
- Cultivates Diverse Resources
- Promotes Continuous Learning
- Facilitates Contribution
- Advocates Feedback and Recognition

Managing Across Boundaries

- Builds Collaborative Relationships
- Engages in Dialogue
- Achieves Integrated Agreements

Summary of Case Study (p. 63)

In a bible song choir, the choir head gave Sartin the chance to choose the music. Sartin decided to choose new songs they never did before. The choir head saw the chosen songs and convinced the choir to go against Sartin's choices because they needed time to learn it and the audience wants to hear the old songs. Sartin became so upset she refused to take on any further responsibility ever again when offered in the future.

Who was at fault, Sartin for being ambitious or the choir leader for failing to set a perimeter, a collaborative relationship, and engaging in a dialogue?

Marching Your Crew through the Odyssey (Part One)

Going from the ideas put forth by Gareth Morgan, the authors argue that instead of managers developing “job descriptions, coordinating activities, or developing schemes for motivating their employees... [Managers] can see themselves as symbolic actors whose primary function is to foster and develop desirable patterns of meaning” (p. 133). To get this result, it is best to avoid a competitive pattern and encourage a supportive community structure.

	Competitive Structure	Community Structure
Motivation For Teamwork	Undercuts it	Promotes It
View towards Peers	Competition	Teammates
Purpose	Individual Purpose <i>“Our for me and only me”</i>	Group Purpose <i>“Looking out for the group”</i>
Eventual Results	Responsibility for Self Unsustainable Community Evolve Separately	Responsibility for Whole Sustainable Community Evolve Cohesively

Part One (con't)

Organizational Leadership

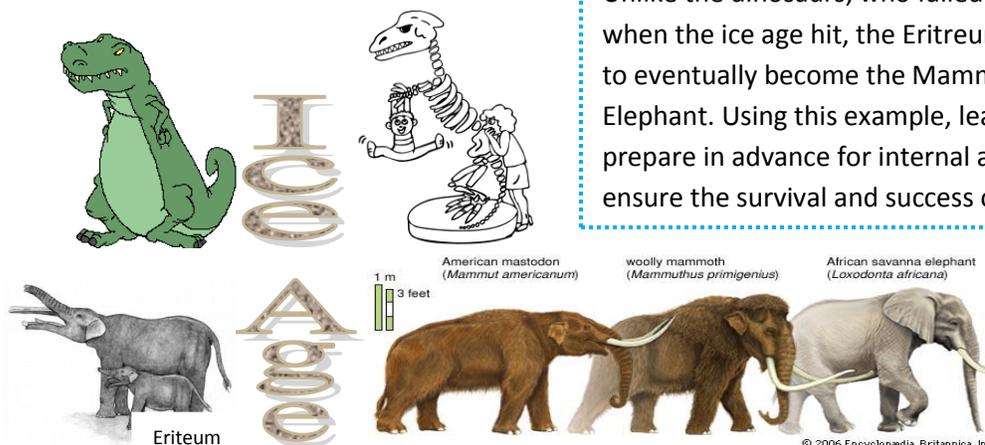
Creating the Culture

- Develops Core Values
- Takes a System Approach
- Builds Community

Anticipating the Future

- Stays Current with Emerging Trends
- Thinks Strategically
- Inspires Pursuit of Shared Vision
- Employs Dynamic Planning
- Enlarges Capacity for Change

The primary differences between the present and future are two things: the process and the worker. The system (the organization of a company) requires that the process of information enables easier access to information for the worker. The best way to do this is to continually be prepared with the changes in technology, global competition, and customer power, which continue to still change to this day. This has changed how people relate, communicate, and gather information. Organizations need to be able to respond to external and internal forces to ensure survival and success. Failure to not do so can result in the end of the business by unforeseen circumstances that could have been prevented. This is why it is essential for the leader to sponsor change, so the followers will embrace change as well.



Unlike the dinosaurs, who failed to evolve with the times when the ice age hit, the Eritreum evolved with the times to eventually become the Mammoth and the modern day Elephant. Using this example, leaders need to be able to prepare in advance for internal and external changes to ensure the survival and success of the company.

Assessing Your Odyssey (Part Two)

This is the part of the book where the authors included an assessment kit to gather feedback based on the attributes of Self-Leadership, People Leadership, and Organizational Leadership. You can either use the kit to assess yourself, get feedback from others, or both. In using the book, the authors offer a guideline to follow when using the kit and how to respond to feedback.

Guideline When Using the Assessment Kit:

- **Select Respondents With Care**
 - Can't know yourself completely
 - Other people influence do us
 - Choose people who are:
 - Central to you work
 - Opinions will impact you
 - Candid and honest
 - You respect them
- **Understand your Workplace**
 - Explain why you are doing this
 - If this is uncommon at work, you may have to spend more time explaining the process over doing it
- **Respondents can be Anonymous**
 - Can help avoid biases in who the answers come from
- **Get Feedback from Multiple People**
 - More people equals better data
- **Reuse Assessment Kit as Needed**
 - See if you are gaining progress

Responding to Feedback:

- **Unexpected Negative Feedback** can result in a predictable cycle of feedback known as **SARA** (Shock, Anger, Rationalization, and Acceptance). Until you reach Acceptance, do not seek clarification.
- **Seek Clarification** if you don't understand, don't assume what someone is saying. This can be done one-on-one or during meetings, pending what the work environment is like. Always remember to:
 - Thank Respondent
 - Limit focus to the important points
 - Listen and be open
 - Summarize any agreements or conclusions to make sure you both understand

Recommendations on using the Kit

1. Complete your assessment first
2. Have your boss and three peers complete the written assessment with a date to have it done
3. Do three direct/oral reports with different peers
4. Courtesy follow up call to say thank you BEFORE reading the assessment.

Example: (Compete it yourself and have others do it. See how your Vision attribute is)

Self-Leadership Skill	Rating Scale							Target for Development	Unable to Assess
Vision: possesses a vivid, compelling view of the future or is capable of imagining the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Observations/Comments:									

The Odyssey Continues (Part Two con't)

When you get all of your data from yourself and your colleagues, you need to record and sort the data, then clarify it.

Recording the Data the data:

1. Put an asterisk (*) to where you and colleagues checked off Target for Development under Self or Other column
2. Record Unable to Assess where applicable
3. Group respondents by self, written by peers, direct reports, and management

Sorting the Data:

1. Bold rating that are three points higher or lower than your rating
2. Bold the target for development number is 50% of those doing the assessment (4 minimum in this case)
3. Do you feel people were honest? Why or why not? Were rating valid then? Why or why not?
4. Any obvious discrepancies between you and others? If so, why?
5. If discrepancies between assessment groups (ex: peers and direct reports) If so, why?

Sample of Recording and Sorting:

Self-Leadership Skill	Self	Manager	Peer	Peer	Peer	Direct	Direct	Direct	Target for Development
Vision: possesses a vivid, compelling view of the future or is capable of imagining the future.	7	6	<u>3*</u>	<u>3*</u>	5	<u>2*</u>	UA	<u>2*</u>	<u>4</u>

This is a sample of someone who is really out of touch with his colleagues. His boss may agree with him but his colleagues apparently don't.

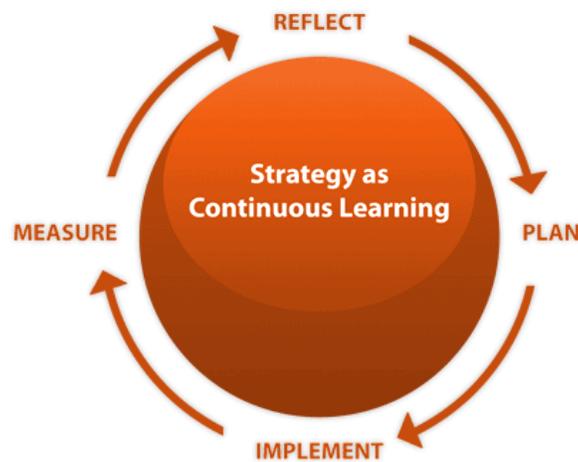


Clarifying the Message:

1. Where did you agree and disagree?
2. Were there any giant gaps between you and your colleagues?
3. Were there conflicts between colleagues? Why?
4. If you need further clarification is needed, only if you have learned to accept it though, go seek it.
5. What messages did you get from the feedback and what changes do you want to see in yourself?
6. Can you identify your new targets for development?

The Never-ending Odyssey (Part Three)

The key thing the authors want to take away from this is that we have to be continuous learners, which is a problem they see in our education system. In education, as students, we are not taught to be self-directed learners. We are spoon fed knowledge, rather than being challenged to find it ourselves. For a leader to truly be successful (and to successfully use the assessment kit), the leader needs to be a continuous learner or engaged in self-directed learning. A leader needs to want to learn more to be able to understand themselves (Self-Leadership), their followers (People Leadership), and how best the world can operate (Organizational Leadership). In order for this to happen, the authors argue we must start “with the problem of learning how to learn” (p. 208). Learning gives any leader the edge against other organizations because they are capable of adapting and evolving as new efficient ideas and technologies become available.



Reflection of the Odyssey (Kevin Kermack)

At first glance, this book may seem simple and shallow but it is in fact deep. Outside of the fact that the book is well organized and easy to read, it was enjoyable. The case studies included in part one made for a more in depth understanding of the material. This is easily increased by how most of the attributes include more than one case study to truly get a deep understanding of the concepts. Most sections always started with a successful leader’s quote, past or present, which would easily summarize their main points. Once I got to the second and third part, I was surprised to see the assessment kit. I enjoyed it and even practised it, though only with close friends. I believe that the kit is helpful and useful to what a person can use and need to learn how to be an effective leader. Overall this book was effective and enjoyable to go through, that showed strong evidence and passion behind the work.