



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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# Ten Books to Boost Your Leadership Journey

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I'm always looking to add good leadership and personal growth books to my collection. I've found the best place for new ones are others' recommendations. I'm also frequently approached by those looking for book recommendations as they begin their leadership growth journey. With those thoughts in mind, I wanted to share 10 personal book recommendations with *The Stepping Stone* readers. While leadership books have been written for centuries, the focus of this article is on more recent books.

## 1. GREAT LEADERS GROW BY MARK MILLER

Delivered in a fable format, this book lays the foundation for the importance of the growth process in your leadership. As an actuarial leader, consider putting intentional focus on growing both your actuarial and leadership skills. The GROW model presented in this book is a great way to accomplish that. The author also writes a great leadership blog several times a week that I highly recommend. See [www.GreatLeadersServe.org](http://www.GreatLeadersServe.org) for more information.

## 2. LEADERSHIP AND SELF-DECEPTION BY THE ARBINGER INSTITUTE

Leadership could have been left out of the title. Self-deception is enough. This is another fable-style book, but it is a deep one that shouldn't be read in one or two sittings. The encouragement of this book is to "get out of the box." It's a simple, yet complex topic with implications everywhere you go. Why? Because that's where you always are. If this book strikes a chord with you, check out the book's sister companion, *The Anatomy of Peace*, also by The Arbinger Institute.

## 3. NECESSARY ENDINGS<sup>1</sup> BY HENRY CLOUD

I lead a leadership development group where I work that entails reading quite a few books. Of all those we have read, this is the most popular one. I believe that is because it has far-reaching personal

and business implications. This book presents several models for creating the needed endings in your life that are holding you back, whether they be relationships that are going nowhere, projects that need to die, etc.

## 4. QUIET LEADERSHIP BY DAVID ROCK

I'm currently participating in an executive coaching group where I work, and this book is a part of our curriculum. I'm grateful because it is changing how I approach workplace conversations. Transforming the performance of those we lead is an underrated and overlooked skill. Doing so requires changing how we engage others and the questions we ask based on how the brain works. As actuaries, we are trained to solve problems. Many of them are very interesting, but we must resist the temptation to solve others' problems if we are to develop them, engage them, and transform their performance.

## 5. REBOUND RULES BY RICK PITINO WITH PAT FORDE

There is no question that Rick Pitino, who in April became the first men's basketball coach to win national titles at two different schools, knows how to rebound from adversity. In this book, Pitino shares the many stories of adversity in his life, how he bounced back from them, and how he's using them to shape the final chapter in his career as a basketball coach. Successful leaders must be willing to face adversity. How we deal with it makes or breaks us. This book gives the reader an appreciation for adversity in our journey and lays out the necessary principles for doing so. You do not have to be a basketball fan to enjoy and learn from this book.

## 6. SOUP: A RECIPE TO NOURISH YOUR TEAM AND CULTURE BY JON GORDON

For any soup recipe, 100 people can make it, and each soup will taste different. Why? Because the one stirring the pot makes all the difference.

Teams are the same way. This fable tells the story of Nancy, a new CEO who takes over a troubled company. A lunch trip to a soup shop unveils a recipe of lessons to help turn the company culture around. This book makes the list easy to read and then apply its principles for making the same type of improvements that Nancy did. In this book, you learn that as the leader of your team, you are the one stirring the pot—and in a position to make all the difference for improving the culture and results.

### 7. *THE 5 LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP* BY JOHN MAXWELL

A leadership book list isn't complete without a John Maxwell recommendation. With so many great books authored by him, I struggled to choose only one. I finally settled on this one because it has had a tremendous influence to me on what it *means* to be a leader. Maxwell walks readers through each of the five levels and covers upsides, downsides and best practices for each level, which make for good application exercises. For those of you new to the leadership journey, I think this is a great book with which to start. And like most of Maxwell's books, you will want to consume it as a leadership textbook over the course of several weeks or months.

### 8. *THE ADVANTAGE<sup>2</sup>* BY PATRICK LENCIONI

This is a great handbook for leading a team, department or organization. It is most applicable for seasoned leaders and/or those in segment-level leadership positions. Regardless, anyone with an interest in leadership will find great information in this book. Readers may be familiar with Lencioni for his series of executive fables (e.g., *The Five Temptations of a CEO*). A great thing about this book is that he compiles a lot of key information from those fables, tying them all together within this book.

### 9. *THE SPEED OF TRUST* BY M. STEPHEN COVEY

M. Stephen is the son of Stephen Covey, leadership guru and author of the famous book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Stepping into some big shoes, M. Stephen created a great book that all leaders should read. From *The 4 Cores of Credibility* to the *13 Behaviors* necessary to build a "moment of trust" in each of our interactions, this book is

full of great information. Actuaries will appreciate Covey's equation that links trust to results:

$$(S \times E)T = R$$

[Strategy times Execution] multiplied by Trust equals Results.

### 10. *WOODEN ON LEADERSHIP* BY JOHN WOODEN WITH STEVE JAMISON

With 10 straight NCAA men's basketball titles in 12 years, former UCLA men's basketball coach John Wooden has plenty to teach about leadership. This book presents 12 of his key leadership lessons as well as many great nuggets from his personal notebooks. Don't like basketball? That's OK because this book is a leadership bible. At almost 300 pages, it is a bit of a behemoth. But, every page is worth consuming. Actuaries will appreciate Wooden's attention to detail.

I hope you add some (or all!) of these books to your collection. After reading them, let me know what you think. Also, let me know if you have additional ones to recommend. ●

A leadership book list isn't complete without a John Maxwell recommendation.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See page 3 of the November 2012 issue of *The Stepping Stone* for a more detailed review of this book by this author.

<sup>2</sup> Discussed by this author in more detail in the February 2013 issue of *The Stepping Stone*.