You Don’t Need a Title to Be a Leader
Mark Sanborn

The Big Idea
Leaders do not necessarily need titles to be what they are. In this book, Mark Sanborn uses the stories of unsung heroes to illustrate how people can improve their organization and enhance their careers.

Part I. A leader is...

They didn’t need a title to be leaders (and neither do you)

Andrea
Andrea Stoller has no real title at all. Still, she plays the role of accountant, nurse, secretary, receptionist, admissions and supply coordinator, and counselor in the school where she works. Andrea does not have a title, but she manages to lead and influence others in significant ways every day.

What good is a title?
Little actual power exists in a title alone. A title is not a job description; when it comes to true power, titles can be quite misleading. Every organization has “nontitled leaders”, who may not have direct responsibility to lead others, yet influence and lead others daily.

An army of lions
An organization that has strong effective leaders at all levels is unstoppable.

Leadership large and small
Each of our daily actions and efforts is as significant as those of large acts. Doing your job with initiative and determination to make a positive change makes you a leader.

An invitation to greatness

Who is a leader?
People who lead, whether or not they have a title, strive to make things better. The desire to influence our world is what real leadership is all about.

Do you think you make a difference?
We change history everyday, for ourselves and the people around us through acts large and small. Leaders realize the impact they have on themselves and on the world around them.

What is it you want?
True leadership is an invitation to greatness that we extend to others. Real leaders accept this invitation first, and bring the same dedication to excellence in whatever they do.

Don’t confuse leadership with fame
Fame is based on what we get in life, while true greatness is based on what we give. It is contribution through action.
Barbara Stammer
Despite the fact that she didn’t have a title for about 20 years, Barbara treated the business of where she worked as though it was her own. She ended up being president of the company, helping build the largest Sonic franchise system in the United States.

Being a leader
Genuine leader makes things better for others as well as themselves, regardless of whether or not their contribution results to financial rewards or popular recognition.

Leaders increase ROI

ROI
ROI can also mean Relationships, Outcomes and Improvements. Leadership is intimately linked to service, not through doing what you are supposed to do but going beyond the call of duty.

The $1,500 beverage
Choosing not to lead or influence situations positively gives negative results. This happens in many ways, every day.

Genuine leaders look for ways to lead
True leader act on their own initiative, and constantly try to develop new and innovative ways to improve situations.

Store greeters, blended beverages and coffee cup sleeves
The people who invented these innovations were not product developers but regular employees. These untitled leaders acted on their own to improve situations.

Taking the lead
Greatness consists of doing great deeds with little means and the accomplishment of vast purposes from the private ranks of life. Relationships that can be strengthened or improved, outcomes that can be improved if you lead, and ideas that may improve products and services, are all opportunities to increase ROI.

Part II. The six principles of leadership

Principle 1: The power of self-mastery

Leading from within
All leadership begins with self-mastery. You cannot lead others until you lead yourself first

An obligation or an opportunity
People who act as leaders almost always act from a sense of opportunity. They interact with the world around them because they want to, not because they have to.

Money vs. meaning
The challenge for anyone is to make both money and meaning during the workday. Real leaders regularly transcend personal needs and interests in their efforts to benefit others. Genuine, authentic leadership infuses meaning in your life.

The road less traveled
To be unique and to contribute something new, you need to take your own course. People who lead are willing to find out what their unique gifts and contributions are, and design their lives around them. Acting as a leader allows you to take control of your life and influence and inspire those around you.
Think like a leader
To avoid exhausting our intellectual capital, we must constantly refresh ourselves by gathering new information and thinking critically about it. Great leaders tend to be great thinkers.

Make time to think
Activity should not be equated with accomplishment. Thinking allows us to separate the mundane from the significant in our lives, helping us clarify our direction and purpose.

Take control of your life
Focus on the things that you can control. This allows you to take control over your life and so you can begin leading it.

Motivation
This refers to why you do what you do. Losing motivation is one of the quickest ways of burning out.

Ways to keep motivated:
1. Make time to reflect
2. Remember to dream
3. Mirror those who are successful around you
4. Retreat to advance
5. Mentor someone else
6. Enjoy the journey
7. Live like a victor, not a victim
8. Search for the pony

Remember the self-mastery index
This is the ratio between promises made and promises kept, to yourself and to others. To be a leader in your life and the lives of others, follow through on your promises.

Leadership action points
1. Stimulate your brain. Read, find ways to ways to introduce yourself to new concepts and ideas, and schedule a regular time for thinking.
2. Record your insights. Ideas are fleeting; they must be captured.
3. Pick a problem. Find a problem worthy of your attention and find ways to make even a small difference.

Principle 2: The power of focus

The importance of focus
Focus and determination beat brains and intellect every time. Your power lies in your ability to focus on doing what is important.

The dangers of drifting
Waiting is an intentional choice. It is when you pause to gather information and insight. Drifting takes away choice. It results from lack of direction.

Distraction is detrimental
We live in a world of perpetual distraction. The goal of anyone who wants to be a leader is to move beyond distraction and focus on what really matters.
Establish an agenda
Staying focused requires an agenda, which is what you hope to accomplish in the short and long term. You should plan to do things of significance and impact, then strategically pursue them.

Prioritize
The key to being efficient and effective is to understand the relative importance of the things we do and spend time on. Create a daily list of things to do, know what is most important and choose to complete it first.

Live intentionally
Acting as a real leader is about making more progress, getting more results and making more contributions. Each moment we live helps to define us.

Leadership action points
1. Eliminate activities that don’t add value. Spend as much of your time as possible on the things that are important to you.
2. Identify your MVP activities. These are the Most Valuable and Profitable ones. Look for those that give the biggest payback on your time and energy.

Principle 3: Power with people
People make it happen
Everything you accomplish happens not only through your efforts, but through the efforts of others as well. Accomplishing any significant goal requires the support and cooperation of others.

Important points:
1. Power with people. Leadership is about power with people, not power over people.
2. Your impact on others. Those who aspire to lead or lead better learn to build people up, encourage them and make them into heroes.
3. Character, competence, connection. These are necessary to get others to follow you. Character involves trust and humility; competence is exuded by good leaders in their actions; appearance and in everything they undertake; and, connection is gained when you are genuinely concerned about others.
4. Motivating others. To get the support and service of others, you need to show them how they will benefit.
5. Confronting problems. Avoiding confrontation leads to more problems. In conflict, confront the problem and not the person.
6. Don’t be afraid to challenge those around you. Challenging people ensures that only those committed will remain. Asking for a big commitment increases the chances of getting a big return.
7. Set an example. Show other the attitude, commitment and performance you expect of them. Getting the best out of others and helping other give their best is the definition of people power.

Leadership action points
1. Express your appreciation. Celebrate the success of those around you regularly and as if it was your own.
3. Collaborate. TEAM stands for Together Everyone Accomplishes More. Each individual’s insight becomes learning points for the rest of the group.
4. Practice diplomatic confrontation. Instead of confronting the teammate or colleague causing a problem, identify the behavior that needs to be changed, reassure the person of your regard for him or her, and address the needed change.
Principle 4: The power of persuasive communication

Communicating is not the objective
Communication is simply the tool for accomplishing understanding. Acting like a leader is all about effective communication.

Important points:

1. A subtle change can make a dramatic difference. Even a few small words can make a big difference in reaching out to others.
2. From telling to selling. The best idea in the world will do no good if nobody accepts it. You have to convince others of the advantages or strengths of your idea.
3. The one sure way to establish rapport. People will trust you when they know you are interested in their best interests and helping them meet their needs.
4. Influence. Effective leaders care more about their influence on others than the impressions they make.
5. Feed back and feed forward. When you don’t take time to communicate clearly, the potential for misunderstanding is high. To increase odds of future success, feed forward by providing people with the information they need ahead of time.
6. Tell a better story. Stories are effective tools, so use them.
7. People remember stories. Stories are the coat pegs of the mind, where people hang their ideas. Stories illuminate, while facts validate.
8. Everything you do makes a difference. Everything you do has an impact. Your actions either help improve others or diminish them.
9. Call for action. Every communication should end with a request for action.
10. How leaders communicate. Leaders sell, influence, strive to be understood, energize, inspire and tell stories.
11. The power of clarity. Great leaders are evaluated not on how long they speak, but on the impact of their message.

Leadership action points

1. Focus on the other person. Effective leaders make it easy to grasp the impact of the message to allow them to understand what it means to them.
2. Simplify the message. Leaders boil down the message for greater clarity.
3. Entertain to engage. To make yourself heard and understood, you must find a way to grab the attention of your audience.

Principle 5: The power of execution

Walking the talk
You have to be able to follow through with what you say you will do.

Leaders have high IQs
This refers to Implementation Quotient. Leaders couple their beliefs to their behavior to get results.

1. A teacher with a high IQ. Sheila, an art teacher at a community center in Highlands Ranch, Colorado, exerts a positive influence on her students through careful attention and willingness to work with each one individually.
2. Visioning. This is the ability of leaders to articulate and achieve visions.
3. The barriers to execution. These are paralysis by analysis, fear of failure, confusing talking with action and accepting explanations as excuses.
4. How to increase your IQ. Dream big, plan small, team up, keep striving and act boldly.
5. Facing your fears. When facing a challenge, ask yourself how you will feel after successfully confronting the challenge and how you will feel if you do not confront it.
Leadership action points

1. Don’t let resistance stop you. You must keep moving forward despite objections.
2. Act boldly. Leaders who know what they stand for and what is important to them act with confidence.

Principle 6: The power of giving

Why Charlie gave up giving
Charlie “Tremendous” Jones decided to spend the rest of his life returning, by making the world a better place.

People give of themselves because:

1. Giving teaches us to look beyond ourselves
2. Giving teaches us to be of greater service in helping others
3. Giving makes the world a better place
4. Giving makes us feel good

What can you give?
Money, time, expertise and skills can all be given.

To lead is to serve
True leadership is about what you give, not what you achieve.

Beyond contribution
To be more effective as a leader, find ways to contribute what will do the most good.

Giving is a gift that gives back
Making the world a better place for others makes it better for yourself as well.

Leadership action points

1. Practice giving without recognition. True giving is about what you contribute, not what you receive. Recognition is never the objective.
2. Determine how you can best contribute. Time, talents and knowledge should be contributed effectively.
3. Give as a family. This allows family members to spend quality time together while working to help others.

Part III. Making a positive difference

Leaving a leadership legacy

Difference makers
Neutrality is a myth. Everyone makes a difference, whether positive or negative. You have a choice on which one to make.

Activity vs. accomplishment
Managing people to ensure they perform their duties is just activity. Taking the time to lead them to new levels of success is accomplishment.
Resume skills vs. leadership skills
Your goal should not be just being good, but being good for something. Limiting that something to personal success limits your impact on your world.

Believing in a better world
Why you live is usually more important than how. Believing in a better world motivates and drives leaders.

Responding to difficulties
People who act as leaders serve as merchants of hope. They show that the greatest satisfaction often comes from meeting challenges head-on.

The leader next door
Sometimes, the person right beside you can become someone to inspire you and lead you to greatness.

Why not you?
Mental and spiritual toughness are characteristics of leaders. They accept and deal with the cards they are dealt, embracing challenges because they are confident they have the attitudes and skills necessary to succeed.

What is your legacy?
Everyone wants their lives to be significant-- and to believe that they will do something that will be remembered. For most people, the best way is to lead whenever they can.

Mastering leadership
Everyone can learn to lead better, but nobody ever really masters leadership. Everyone is a work in progress.