

## Small Books with Big Messages

The following are all short takes on books discussing important concepts in story form.

### ***Radical Leap* by Steve Farber**

Steve Farber, former vice president of The Tom Peters Company tells an inspirational story which is entertaining and engaging. This modern parable sets the tone for a radical new approach to leadership.

The story begins on a sunny California beach where Steve has an unusual encounter with a surfer dude named Edg. Despite his appearance Edg seems to know a lot about leadership. This brief interaction propels Steve into a journey that will change his concept of leadership. Along the way he learns about Extreme Leadership, and what it means to take the Radical Leap:

The Extreme leader consciously and intentionally cultivates love in order to generate boundless energy and inspire courageous audacity. And he or she must provide the proof that it has all been worthwhile: proof through the alignment between word and action; proof through the standing up for what's right; proof through measurable, tangible signs of progress; and proof through the experience of phenomenal success as well as glorious failure. That the LEAP (Love, Energy, Audacity, Proof).

Geared to business leaders at any organizational level who aspire to change things for the better, the Radical Leap is sure to create a new breed of Extreme Leaders.

Read these wise words about vision which captured me:

Every business book you pick up will tell you that you need to have a vision statement, so any company that's done its requires reading will have one. It develops like this: A group of senior executives, now known as the 'executive team', goes away on an offsite, sits down together, and has a poetry contest. They try to hammer out just the right words and phrases, and they argue for hours, days, sometimes, over the choice of words. They tear their hair out, they fight, and ultimately, at the end of the day – they have created a magnificent document, and they are so, so proud. So what do they do? Thy laminate it. Laminate it on little wallet-sized cards and hand out a copy to everybody in the organization.

Most corporate vision statements are generic and meaningless to the very people they are supposed to inspire. A vision statement doesn't generate energy, love does, great ideas do,

principles and values do. Vision from the heart is an expression of love, and not only is that more energizing, it IS energy.

The Extreme Leader's job is to connect all those hearts. So instead of reciting a vision statement, feel the intent of that statement, reflect on the ideals that it represents, and take it all into your own heart. Then at every opportunity – whether you are talking one-on-one or standing in front of a crowd – you say, in essence, 'This is who I am, this is what I believe, this is what I think we can do together if we put our hearts into it. Please join me and let's help each other become the vision.

Go for it! Read it! You won't be sorry.

### ***Awakening the Leader Within: A Story of Transformation by Kevin Cashman***

This book is very different than a typical leadership book that explores theories and concepts. It is an interactive coaching experience which takes you on your own journey to awaken a new way of leading as well as new way of living. Kevin Cashman does an outstanding job of blending an inspirational story with the power of reflective questions. This is a transformative book which offers deep, enduring ways to create value in all parts of your life.

The story is based on the premise that you need to grow as a person to grow as a leader. The story centers on CEO Benson Quinn who is facing a deluge of personal and professional challenges. As Quinn faces the defining moments of his life, you will learn valuable lessons about authentic and purposeful leadership, applicable both in your home life and in the boardroom. This book goes way beyond results-based leadership and performance to achieving life's destiny.

This book was a life-enriching experience. I could not put it down and at the same time it was very moving and rated a 6 Kleenex read.

### ***Inspirational Leadership by Richard Olivier***

Henry the V is Shakespeare's greatest leader – inspired and inspiring, visionary yet pragmatic, powerful yet responsible. This fascinating book draws on Olivier's intimate knowledge of the play, and its absorbing central character, to unmask the secrets of inspirational leadership and reveal the timeless lessons it holds for managers and leaders today.

This book is a very unique approach to illuminating the psychology and competencies of inspirational leadership. There are many extraordinary and useful parallels between Shakespeare's hero and the challenges leaders face today. The book is full of telling lessons.

My personal favorite is the lesson learned in Act 4, Scene 6

“The decision is the one that has outlived Henry more than any other. Military strategists and moral philosophers down the centuries have debated it. Does a leader have the right to kill their prisoners?”

The English have defeated the first charge of the French and have been collecting prisoners behind their lines. The French prisoners now outnumber their guards. Half of the English are starting to disarm and de-armor their prisoners when the French trumpet sounds the next attack.

Put yourself in Henry’s shoes for a moment. There is at least 20,000 French horses at the top of the hill ready to charge; there are approximately 5,000 French prisoners behind your lines currently occupying about 4,000 of your total of 8,000 troops. What would you do?

Henry opts for the apparently brutal decision of killing the prisoners. If he had not done so, he risked his small force being caught in the middle and annihilated.

No one would ever wish to have to make this decision. But those who step into leadership will be more likely than others to face this kind of harsh reality (if not on such a horrendous scale).

Occasionally leaders are faced with the tough decision of reducing headcount in order for their company to survive. This means innocent people will suffer.

I was struggling with this whole concept and was discussing it with one of America’s finest, a US now civilian Marine. The missing piece for him was the question of dignity. In massive layoffs the importance of dignity must not be forgotten either, and the grief for those who are left

### ***The Greatest Salesman in the World by Og Mandino***

What you are today is not important – for in this bestseller you will learn how to change your life by applying the secrets found in the ancient scrolls. This book is often regarded as one of the most inspiring, uplifting and motivating books ever written.

The author has woven the ten key principles of selling into the fabric of an extremely fascinating story. Set in ancient Damascus, the plot is original and ingenious.

My daughter Danielle, herself an incredible salesperson, recommended this book to me as a must read. Read this short story to learn the secret of the ten ancient leather scrolls carrying the principles for greatness.

### ***The Abilene Paradox and Other Meditations on Management by Jerry Harvey***

The Abilene Paradox is a humorous story of a family trip to Abilene on a hot summer day. This story is established as a metaphor for how groups frequently agree to take actions that contradict what individual members really want to do or believe is right. Calling this the

'Abilene Paradox,' Harvey explores how events and decisions within organizations gather momentum once set in motion and often take on lives of their own, a concept familiar to any team-based organization.

With humor and insight, and a very irreverent slant, the author offers a series of insightful and funny "meditations" on the craziness of every day organizational life. The stories in this book are timeless and provocative.

### ***Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting out of the Box by The Arbinger Institute***

This book shows how most personal and organizational problems are the result of a little-known problem called self-deception. Through an entertaining and highly instructive story, leadership and Self-Deception shows what self-deception is. How people get trapped in it, how it undermines personal achievement and organizational performance and most importantly, the surprising way to solve it.

To give you an idea of what's at stake, consider the following analogy. An infant is learning to crawl. She begins by pushing herself backward around the house. Backing herself around, she gets lodged behind the furniture. There she thrashes about, crying and banging her little head against the furniture. She is stuck and hates it. So she does the only thing she can think of to get herself out – she pushes even harder, which only worsens her problem. She is more stuck than ever.

If this infant could talk, she would blame the furniture for her troubles. She, after all, is doing everything she can think of, the problem couldn't be hers. But of course the problem is hers, even though she can't see it. While she is truly doing everything she can think of, the problem is precisely that she can't see how she's the problem. Self deception is just like this.

The story is about an executive who spends an incredible couple of days learning first about his self-deception and then the solution to get "out of the box".



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**About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD**

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is the advisor to call to work with you and your executive team as a confidante and - some would say - corporate shrink. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.