

From the Inside Out: Leading Where it Matters Most: The How-to Guide to Leading Nonprofits for Impact

Great leadership begins from the inside out. It starts with you. You will only lead your organization or board to change if you have first mastered the art of leading yourself. Succeed there and you will be unstoppable. With these opening words, I was immediately drawn into *From the Inside Out: Leading Where it Matters Most: The How-to Guide to Leading Nonprofits for Impact*.

As the title indicates, this is a book written for those who provide leadership in the not-for-profit sector. However, author and organizational strategist Tom Okarma offers invaluable leadership intel applicable for any leader regardless of where he or she hangs their hat.

Check out these Book Notes to get a taste of what lies in store.

Title: *From the Inside Out: Leading Where it Matters Most: The How-to Guide to Leading Nonprofits for Impact*

Author: Tom Okarma

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Book Description:

From The Inside Out was written for nonprofit leaders and those that are called to make a difference. If you are driven by purpose, have a heart for your mission, and are determined to make a bigger impact in your community or the world in general, this is the book for you. Having both served as a board member, volunteer, and donor, as well as worked with many nonprofit leadership teams, top-rated author Tom Okarma takes a unique perspective on what it takes to lead successfully in the nonprofit world. Focusing on four unique elements of nonprofit management, Tom coaches you through the journey to become the leader you were meant to be.

From The Inside Out is comprised of four parts, each building on the last. Part One focuses on Leading Yourself — understanding your strengths and weaknesses, learning about yourself as a leader, and mastering the unique key areas of responsibility where you should focus your most significant efforts. Part Two centers around Leading the Organization — building a successful team of employees, leading them to achieve goals, and successfully leading and inspiring your volunteers. Part Three focuses on one of the most challenging and impactful areas nonprofit leaders face — leading the board. You will learn about the board's role in the organization, how to find and develop great board directors, how to lead your board successfully, secrets of other great boards, and what to do when you run into challenges. Part Four gives you the tools and insight you need to put it all together and successfully lead change efforts in your organization. You will learn how to prep your team, create a plan for change, how to deal with issues, and how to stay positive and focused on your goals, despite setbacks.

Understanding the role and unique challenges you face as a nonprofit leader, Tom also includes a final section in the book with insight on how to solve some of your toughest issues and what to do when you get stuck trying to push through change. Tom combines tried-and-true leadership strategies with real-world experience, adding on just enough stories and humor to make this difficult journey you face seem possible. From *The Inside Out* will not only tell you what to do to become a better leader, it will give you the steps you need to follow to make change a reality in your organization. You will become a better leader, your team will become more effective, your goals will actually come to life, and your nonprofit will be infused with new energy. From *The Inside Out* will help your agency make a bigger impact in the world you serve.

Book Quotes:

Great leadership begins from the inside out. It starts with you. You will only lead your organization or board to change if you have first mastered the art of leading yourself. Succeed there and you will be unstoppable.

LOCATION: 65

Leaders become great when they lead from their strengths, face their weaknesses head on, and fill their team with people who are gifted in those areas the leader may not be. LOCATION: 129

11 Characteristics of Great Self Leadership.

- 1. INTEGRITY**
- 2. MORAL COURAGE**
- 3. TRANSPARENCY**
- 4. VALUES-DRIVEN**
- 5. RESPECT**
- 6. HUMILITY**
- 7. ENCOURAGEMENT & POSITIVITY**
- 8. COLLABORATION**
- 9. EMPOWERMENT**
- 10. ADAPTABILITY**
- 11. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Shrinking away from a tough call or delegating it to someone else undermines a leader and damages their ability to lead in the future. It takes courage to say and do the right thing yet that is what we leaders are supposed to do. LOCATION: 190

Transparency is one personal characteristic your team needs to see in you before they will trust you.

LOCATION: 209

One of your most important roles as the leader, is developing more leaders. LOCATION: 296

If you want your team to respect you, follow you, and be inspired by you as a leader you must hold yourself to a higher level. Your team will endeavor to hold themselves to the same standards. LOCATION: 345

There are some decisions only you as the leader should make, some that members of your team should make (without you), and those that should be made with your recommendations or brought to you for discussion. The better your team members become at decision-making, the more you can delegate to them. This helps them grow and frees you up to do what only you should be doing. LOCATION: 435

There are nine key responsibilities each leader must own as a part of their role in leading a nonprofit. If you want to help your organization get to the next level, achieve your mission, and make a bigger impact, it is critical that you understand and embrace these nine responsibilities.

1. Protect the Vision
2. Align with the Mission
3. Embrace and Enforce the Values
4. Develop and/or Implement a Strategic Plan
5. Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.
6. Maintaining Key External Relationships
7. Building the Best, Collaborative, Talented Team Possible
8. Be Around, But Not in The Way LOCATION: 441-613

Leadership expert Max De Pree once said the leader is the agency's Chief Reality Officer. People look to them for facts, honesty, and to "call 'em as he sees 'em". LOCATION: 795

Your team will work harder for you and deliver community impact like you've never seen, if you lead from the heart. What does a Servant Leader do?

- They value diverse opinions—not just "yes-men".
- They cultivate a culture of trust.
- They develop other leaders.
- They encourage their team members.
- They think long term, not just in the moment.
- They act with humility.
- They make others feel valued in their roles.
- They empower others and bring out their best.
- They rarely use power or authority as leverage.
- They know what to focus on — the important, rather than getting sucked into the urgent, but less important.
- They are a resource to others, not just their boss. They are there to help others do their job, not the other way around. LOCATION: 843

Well-performing agencies all have well-performing boards. Everything begins at the top. An agency with a strong board, yet underperforming team can still reach some modest level of success. But an agency with an underperforming board but a strong team will consistently struggle to accomplish goals and achieve their mission. LOCATION: 1062

In the simplest terms, the board has one employee — you, the leader. The board's role is to govern the organization, provide leadership oversight and accountability, keep the organization true to the mission, serve as ambassadors in the community, and support the efforts of the agency as much as possible. As a member of the board, they also have a role of providing financial support to the organization. LOCATION: 1067

Neuroscience tells us the human brain isn't actually wired to embrace change — it's wired for security. Many people see change not as potentially positive, but instead as a threat to their current survival, safety, and comfort. Even if things aren't great, most people are willing to endure, rather than risk the possibility that the unknown could be worse. LOCATION: 1945

As a leader, you should be one of the first to recognize the need for change. LOCATION: 1962

Your primary goal in the change process — and the first thing to work on with your team is changing culture. Before anyone will respond to your call for change, you'll need to change hearts, minds, and attitudes. If you can do that, you're halfway there. In fact, if you do it well, your team will even help you identify the changes needed and work to make them a reality. LOCATION: 2014

Strategic Plan

- Key Component 1: Vision Statement. A strategic plan begins with a Vision Statement. This is a high level, aspirational statement of what your agency would like to see the future look like. Some say to think big and make it something that may never even happen.
- Key Component 2: Mission Statement. A mission statement describes specifically why your agency exists. It describes what role your agency will play as you pursue your Vision. Sometimes people get confused about the differences between a mission and a vision. The way I keep them straight is by thinking of the vision as an almost unachievable future you want, and the mission statement as which part of the vision you will play.
- Key Component 3: Values Statement. A values statement lists the behavioral ground rules an agency has agreed to follow. It describes acceptable and desirable behavior and conduct (and conversely unacceptable and undesirable conduct) when anyone is engaged in agency activities.
- Key Component 4: Strategic Priorities. These are the high-level themes the agency has decided to pursue to achieve its mission. They are intended to be achieved over the short-mid-term, say 2-3 years, though some agencies look out at a 3-5 year window. I prefer 3 years max as things can change so quickly along with new unanticipated trends and issues popping up frequently.
- Key Component 5: Goals. These are the very specific steps to be taken to achieve your strategic priorities. The better crafted they are, the easier it will be for others to follow and accomplish.
- Key Component 6: Metrics. What you measure matters, and what you measure gets improved. The things you measure get better because it helps direct everyone's attention and focus.
- Key Component 7: Accountabilities. Each strategic priority and each goal needs a home — a person or a team that is responsible to achieve it. They should be required to provide progress reports periodically to ensure acceptable progress is being made. I recommend these be reviewed at each team or board meeting to keep the momentum moving forward and to identify any significant issues. LOCATION: 2109-2170

The executive director is the chief caretaker of the agency and therefore responsible for strategic plan results. While everyone owns their piece of the plan, it's up to the executive director to coordinate all the moving parts and ensure that the plan is being followed. LOCATION: 2187

I'd like to share a few ideas from change expert and Harvard Business School professor John Kotter. In his e-book *The Eight Step Process for Leading Change*, Kotter outlines eight critical steps to take, to make change actually work.

1. Create a sense of urgency.
2. Form a powerful coalition.
3. Create a vision for change.
4. Communicate the Vision.

5. Remove obstacles. Create short-term wins.
6. Build on the change.
7. Anchor the changes in your agency culture. LOCATION: 2314-2338

Leadership begins from the inside out. Change starts with you. If you want your organization to have a bigger impact, you need to start with yourself, develop your team, build your board, and finally lead change.
LOCATION: 2411

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.