

The Journal of Values-Based Leadership

Volume 12
Issue 1 *Winter/Spring 2019*

Article 16

January 2019

Book Review: Serve to Lead: 21st Century Leaders Manual by James Strock

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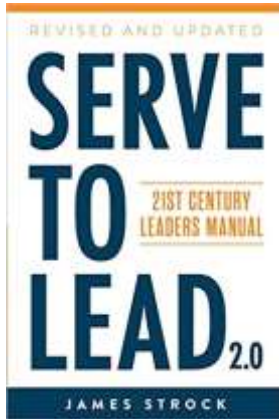
Rao, M. S. (2019) "Book Review: Serve to Lead: 21st Century Leaders Manual by James Strock," *The Journal of Values-Based Leadership*: Vol. 12 : Iss. 1 , Article 16.

Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22543/0733.121.1262>

Available at: <https://scholar.valpo.edu/jvbl/vol12/iss1/16>

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Serve to Lead: 21st Century Leaders Manual



Reviewer: Professor M.S. Rao

Author: James Strock

ISBN-13: 978-1978489554

ISBN-10: 1978489552

CreateSpace, Second Ed., May 10, 2018

Paperback: 352 pages

Language: English

Serve to Lead is one of the finest books I have read on leadership in my lifetime. It will change the way you think about leadership, life, success and service. – Professor M.S. Rao, PhD

Introduction

James Strock's revised and updated book, *Serve to Lead: 21st Century Leaders Manual*, reveals that 21st century leadership commands new perspectives and instructs that because everybody can serve, then truly all can lead. Strock's manual addresses how to excel as a servant and a leader, acquire the necessary tools and techniques required to lead, and learn the intricacies to understand 21st century leadership and servant followership.

What is Inside?

This book equips the reader – whether a CEO or a novice, an entrepreneur or a multinational worker, a government agency, not-for-profit organization, or the military – with the tools necessary to prevail. It outlines extensive interviews, business case studies, psychological research, biography, history, and a synopsis of relevant literature. The manual shows how to transform life's raw materials and create work a “masterpiece of service.” It outlines fundamental messages as follows:

- servant leadership is the essence of effective leadership in our digital age;
- everybody can lead, because everybody can serve;
- transactional thinking and approaches are being superseded by creating and sustaining relationships;
- networks are replacing hierarchies;
- advancing the values of customers unlocks untold values;
- a primary task of leaders is to create more leaders; and
- twenty-first-century leadership integrates life and work.

The author differentiates between the twentieth century and twenty-first century with inspiring examples. He unveils that in the twenty-first century, leadership has been replaced by service; transactions by relationships; inside-out by outside-in; top-down by bottom-up; hierarchies by networks; administration by empowerment; efficient by effective; information by judgment; tangible values by intangible values; quantitative by soft skills; workaholic

tendencies by integrated life; retirement by redeployment; failure by stepping stones; employees by team members; work-life separation by work-life integration; career path by life path; and security by adaptability.

Leadership Takeaways

Serve to Lead: 21st Century Leaders Manual provides a number of leadership maxims and suggestions for consideration and possible implementation – whatever the work environment:

- Like our ancestors and predecessors, we must make fateful decisions based on incomplete knowledge to navigate unfamiliar waters.
- Leadership is the killer app that can transform all aspects of life and work.
- When you engage the *Serve to Lead* system, you are deciding to alter your approach to leadership and life. It requires stretching and growing and openness to change – sustained by relentless dedication.
- No matter how strong their past or present performance, any individual or enterprise not committed to developing leadership will not retain a preeminent place.
- One of the greatest evidences of love is to risk a valued relationship by acting in a way you believe necessary for the welfare of those you are serving – even against their expressed wishes.
- The greater the leadership failure, the more likely one will find, at root, a self-serving orientation.
- It's only immodest if you're thinking of it from the inside-out, rather than the outside-in.
- To be the best in the world necessitates your drawing upon all your capacities. In the doing, you will draw on what is unique in yourself. No one can replicate it.
- Failure can be viewed as a learning tool. One of America's paramount competitive advantages is our cultural acceptance of failure. We're a people of second chances—even third chance. Students change their course of study when things don't work out. Business failures are overlooked and overcome. Immigrants come to start again.
- There was no better example than the military. When one examines the careers of successful military leaders – from Lord Nelson to George Washington to Napoleon to Dwight Eisenhower, and many, many others – one finds the golden thread of a commander's love for those for whom he (or today, she) is responsible. A vivid example is offered by Theodore Roosevelt. TR's meteoric political ascent – from a subcabinet post to the presidency in four years – was supercharged by his renowned battlefield leadership in the Spanish-American War, Cuban campaign of July 1898.
- You would not presume to speak to an audience in a foreign nation without extensive, carefully-tailored preparation.
- There are no universal "rules" for effective communications. The preferred approach is that which best serves your intended audience, from *their* point of view.
- Honor your audience. The sole metric for determining the effectiveness of a communication is how it's received by the intended audience.
- Use stories to engage your audience. Resist cross-pressures against simple or direct communications. Prepare, Prepare, Prepare. Then prepare some more. Rehearse extensively so you can be spontaneous in performance.

- A vision requires a plan. The more imaginative, the more authentic the vision, the more important is the plan.
- Today, the only effective leadership is serving others. It's no longer optional. It's the essence of twenty-first century leadership.
- A defining fact today is that the decisive evaluation of the contribution of leaders, including those in high positions, is increasingly based on the judgment of those they serve.
- Leadership is becoming an open source project, where many people and organizations can apply their expertise or assert their views and values. Those being served increasingly have the power not only to define or expand the project, but to terminate it.
- In the wired world of the twenty-first century, advancing shared values creates value.
- When leaders fall short of ethical standards today, they illuminate a space susceptible to accountability and competition. Doing the right thing is, increasingly, a competitive plus.
- The critical issue is not what you are selling — it's what your customers are buying. Uncovering the latter may require deep engagement and applied imagination.
- A company that lives by the transaction, dies by the transaction. You should aim for a unique, durable relationship that customers value beyond any particular transaction.
- Whatever the nature of your enterprise, your ultimate concern is to serve your customers. You should mobilize every resource — financial, intellectual, emotional and spiritual — to serve them effectively. Ultimately, the culture you create for customers is the culture you create for your employees and others with whom you collaborate.
- You may find yourself navigating between intended and unintended — appropriate and inappropriate — offensiveness in service of your team. Seek out third parties who can assess the relationships and provide an accurate, unbiased, and actionable assessment of your interactions with others.
- In preparing any written or spoken communication, don't hesitate to ask numerous questions in advance to determine how you can best serve. Your audience, and those representing it, may have ideas altogether different from what you would have anticipated. Collaborative preparation may result in a product more compelling than you or they independently envisioned.
- To best serve others, discern and appeal to their perceived self-interest to the greatest possible extent. To persuade others to alter their ways of acting or thinking, you must understand the mix of interests and incentives to which they will most readily respond. You can transform your interaction into a joint endeavor applying your contribution to their areas or greatest concern.
- In the twentieth century, authority conferred credibility. Today, formal authority no longer gets the benefit of the doubt. More often than not, it labors under the burden of doubt. In the twenty-first century, credibility confers authority.
- Draft the single sentence that you would like to express the essence of your life. It may seem difficult initially but limit yourself to single sentence. Perhaps it would be the opening or closing memorable, apt line that you would have others summon up in looking back on your life. Make this your vision statement for *leading your life* from this day forward.

- Select your inner circle with care. Your choice of those who populate your inner and outer lives is of defining significance.
- Make your life a masterpiece of service.

What is the Recommendation?

“There are only two leaders in the world who are competent to author a book on servant leadership – Robert Greenleaf and James Strock. James Strock is born to serve the world. The world is blessed to have a servant leader like him.” – Professor M.S. Rao

This revised and updated book deals with servant leadership, soft leadership, and 21st century leadership. It outlines a plethora of real-life examples and draws a blueprint to excel as both a servant leader and a compassionate leader. It emphasizes more on relationship-oriented leadership than on transaction-oriented leadership. It stresses people before profit. It is a life-changing book emphasizing transformational leadership. It outlines inspiring images of great leaders including Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King Jr. It is a readable book and well-organized with actionable ideas and insights with great quotes and overall, is written in a conversational tone. Each word in this book is a pearl. The ideas and insights on leadership are well-punched. Precisely, it is a practical book packed with action.

James Strock walks his talk and leads from the front in this book. He is an effective and inspiring storyteller. When reading this book, the reader will be able to connect with the content quickly by visualizing images and digesting the essence easily. He has an immense knowledge and a kind heart to serve others. He is passionate about leadership and is an international authority on 21st century leadership and servant leadership. He is widely read, and a true servant leader. He invests his precious time in sharing his knowledge, ideas, and insights on 21st century leadership. He adds value to others consistently with his ideas and insights. This book reflects his passion for service and his vision to build moral and ethical leaders globally.

This book is an encyclopedia on 21st century leadership and serves as a library for servant and for 21st century leaders globally. It is an illuminating and inspiring book worth investing one’s precious time. I have read thousands of books on leadership and this is one of the finest books on leadership and service. This book is useful for learners and leaders at all levels including high-level officers. This book can be gifted to friends who will thank you forever for your kind gesture. Highly recommend reading this book!

“If Robert Greenleaf is the father of servant leadership, James Strock is the SAGE on servant leadership.” – Professor M.S. Rao

About the Reviewer

Professor M.S. Rao, Ph.D. is the Father of *Soft Leadership* and Founder of MSR Leadership Consultants, India. He is an International Leadership Guru with 37 years of experience and the author of over 40 books including the award-winning ‘21 Success Sutras for CEOs’ URL: <http://www.amazon.com/21-Success-Sutras-Ceos-Rao/dp/162865290X>. He is a C-Suite advisor and a sought-after keynote speaker globally. He is passionate about serving and

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