
THE HEART- LED LEADER

How Living and Leading from the Heart
Will Change Your Organization and Your Life

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INTRODUCTION:

LOVE-DRIVEN RESULTS

THE JOURNEY TO HEART-LED LEADERSHIP COVERS ONLY 18 INCHES, but it lasts a lifetime.

That's where I want to take you with this book—on an 18-inch journey, the distance from your head to your heart.

It starts with these important questions: Who are you? Who do you want to become? What do you want to be known for as a person and as a leader? And what is your leadership philosophy?

If you don't have a leadership philosophy, that's OK. Most leaders don't have a specific philosophy, at least not one they can name. I hope to change that. I hope you'll choose to become a heart-led leader, or what I call a Who Leader. I want this for you because it will change your life, your organization, and the lives of everyone you touch. And if you do it right, it will also change the lives of everyone they touch. I will prove to you in this book the game-changing impact of heart-led leadership. If you want to have that kind of impact in the world, you have found your leadership philosophy.

But only if you're willing to let it change your heart. The heart, of course, is nothing more than a wonderful metaphor. For centuries, the muscle that pumps blood throughout our bodies has also been known as the keeper of our emotions. We use the heart to describe how we feel, how the world around us moves us, and how people and experiences change the very essence of who we are at the deepest, most intimate levels.

Leading from the heart means leading with love. If the word love scares you, then use passion, commitment, compassion, servant leadership, purpose-driven, mission-driven, or your choice of any similar word or phrase, because at the core these are all forms of love. In this context, love is simply an unselfish and genuine concern for the good of others. So when we lead from the heart—when we lead with love—we care deeply about serving others, about selflessness, about doing the right thing even when it's difficult, about developing empathy and demonstrating generosity, about all those ideals that may seem "soft" but, in fact, allow us to live and lead more powerfully.

Defining your leadership philosophy is one of the most important steps you can take as a leader. Your philosophy filters every thought and action you take as a leader. Every decision you make and every conversation you have with your team are reflections of who you are. And when you take the 18-inch journey to heart-led leadership—and it's definitely a journey—you will continually define and refine who you are.

IN 2010 I WROTE *It's Not Just Who You Know*, a best-selling book about the power of building lasting, genuine relationships in our lives and in our workplaces. The final chapter ends with these words: "It's not just who you know—it's who you are."

I've been amazed and humbled by the reaction to that book, and I believe more strongly than ever in its message. But I've also come to realize that the impact of those final four words—"it's who you are"—goes far beyond relationships or the ways in which you connect with people. Who you are goes to the very core of how you live, how you serve, and how you lead.

My unlikely journey began as a dyslexic kid in a small village in upstate New York, and it has taken me all over the planet and put me in a position to listen to and learn from some of the best leaders in some of the world's top-performing organizations. I've met thousands of leaders in my career, and I make it a point to learn as much as I can from every one of them. In all of my conversations, one thing has become abundantly clear: leaders and organizations that lead with their hearts are more successful and drive better results than those that don't.

Love and results are not opposites. They are two sides of the same coin. It is not love or results. It is love-driven results.

If you love what you do, if you love the people you do it with, if you love your culture, if you love your mission, if you love your team, if you love your investors, if you love your clients, if you love your customers—you will gain better results. Period.

There are many ways to make money, build businesses, and achieve goals that don't involve leading from the heart. If you think that business is purely about earning a living, making money, and driving profits, then I believe you're missing the real meaning of life and, more important, limiting your impact on the world.

Heart-led leadership transcends numbers and spreadsheets. It is more sustainable and more rewarding. It also inspires, encourages, and influences the world for the better. And that leads to even greater results, because it creates passionate teams—teams that believe in the mission, teams that provide discretionary effort (effort beyond what's required of them), teams that model heart-led leadership and pass it on to others. It provides everything any business leader would want—higher sales, better margins, greater employee engagement with less turnover, stronger teams, greater efficiencies, more innovation, and consistent growth. You name the positive business outcome and I believe you will find heart-led leadership is at its core.

Hear me loud and clear. I do not advocate heart-led leadership because of some touchy-feely, utopian, kumbaya belief. I advocate it because it is the fastest, most powerful way to drive cold, hard, pragmatic bottom-line results for your organization, and I intend to prove this to you in stories throughout this book.

When this type of love—this heart-led leadership—is modeled at all levels of an organization, then the positive results multiply into a remarkable and sustainable force. I've seen the positive results of heart-led leadership in some of the most unexpected places.

I've seen how a Who Leader, Tee Green, built a medical software company that was so valued for its heart-led leadership that when it was purchased for \$644 million and merged with a company six times its size, the new company retained the Greenway Health name and kept Green as the CEO.

I've seen how a Who Leader, Cheryl Bachelder, took over a restaurant chain struggling with a long history of declining sales and profits and used heart-led leadership to help grow its stock price by 450 percent over six years.

I've seen how a Who Leader, Frank DeAngelis, took a high school where thirteen students and teachers lost their lives in a mass shooting and used heart-led leadership to overcome that tragedy and transform the school's culture into one of love, hope, and promise.

I've seen how a Who Leader, Chris Warner, used heart-led leadership lessons to lead a team of mountain climbers up K2, where nearly 25 percent of summit attempts end in death, and to become one of only nine Americans to ever stand on the peaks of the world's two highest mountains, Everest and K2.

I've seen how a Who Leader, Walt Rakowich, took an S&P global real estate corporation that was on the brink of bankruptcy (its stock price had dropped 95 percent and its market capitalization had dropped from \$20 billion to less than \$1 billion) and restored it to profitability, in part by practicing heart-led leadership.

I've seen how a Who Leader, Warden Burl Cain, took the largest, most dangerous maximum-security prison in American and changed it, using heart-led leadership, into a place so safe that in-prison assaults dropped 70 percent in 15 years and inmates serving life sentences without parole now sell popcorn and cotton candy to kids at the prison's annual rodeo.

I'll share those stories and many more in the pages of this book, because they can help you—as they helped me—develop deeper insights into what means to live, love, and lead as a heart-led leader.

The Heart-Led Leader is the product of the life lessons formed from decades of experiences that have changed me for the better. Some of these lessons are a result of my personal experiences and my successes and failures in life; others were shared with me by the incredible individuals who have crossed my path—CEOs, entrepreneurs, school principals, sales executives, coaches, Olympians, rock stars, astronauts, mountain climbers, and friends.

You might think that this type of leadership philosophy—this ability to lead from the heart—is reserved for certain personality types or for leaders who have risen to the top of their organizations. But I've discovered that heart-led leadership exists at all levels of organizations and in companies

of all types and sizes. Heart-led leaders are in nonprofits, start-ups, schools, faith-based organizations, small businesses, and Fortune 500 companies. They work in cubicles and in corner offices.

What if you embraced heart-led leadership as your leadership philosophy?

I know for certain that your life will change—for the better. The lives of your employees, co-workers, clients, customers, friends, and family will change—for the better. The lives of people in your communities will change—for the better. And your organizations will change—for the better.

I know this because I've seen it. I know this because I've lived it.

And you can live it, too, if you decide to take this 18- inch journey with me.