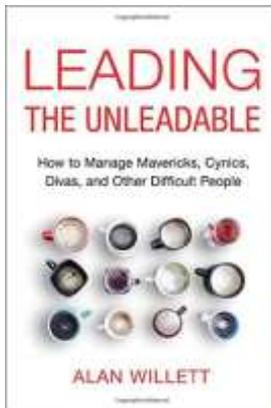


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Leading the Unleaddable – How to Manage Mavericks, Cynics, Divas, and Other Difficult People***  
Author: **Alan Willett**  
Publisher: **AMACOM**  
List Price: **\$17.95**      Format: **Paperback, 225 pages**  
Publication Date: **Nov 29, 2016**      ISBN: **978-0814437605**  
Reviewer: **John Poulos**      Review Date: **January 2017**

### Introduction

The author – Alan Willett, an expert in leadership development and organizational culture change – provides through this book a roadmap to exceptional leadership. He reminds us that achieving this goal requires us to accept that:

- The call to leadership is a choice
- Leadership is about leading people
- Leadership comes with a taxonomy of trouble
- The trouble is your fault, even when it is not

Becoming an exceptional leader is all about leading people to achieve more than they believed was possible (“creating a culture where people do extraordinary things”), along with a willingness to directly deal with the trouble inherent in this role. What the author calls the “unleaddable” – the mavericks, cynics, divas, slackers and other difficult types – are often at the heart of leadership challenges. The book presents a framework, approach and recommendations for “transforming the troublesome to the tremendous.”

### Overview of Book’s Structure

The book is organized into four sections, as follows:

Part 1 – The Call to Exceptional Leadership – presents the challenges that leaders must face, makes the case for raising the bar and accepting the call to exceptional leadership. It also describes the seven elements of the mindset required to achieve this level.

Part 2 – The Leader in Action: Spotting Trouble, Dealing with Trouble – provides guidance on how to detect trouble, including methods to overcome the blind spots on your radar. It then prescribes practical steps to dealing with troublesome people,

outlines follow-up techniques to achieve enduring improvement, and closes with a chapter on approaching the decision to “remove or improve” a troublesome individual for the benefit of the larger team, project or organization.

Part 3 – The Leader in Action: Preventing Trouble – takes this a step further, establishing the importance of setting compelling goals as key to preventing trouble, with guidance on how to set expectations for excellence on an ongoing basis. It closes with a chapter on how to start a project so that it yields exceptional results.

Part 4 – Leading Leaders – addresses the unique challenges and potential of leading people who lead people themselves, and growing these leaders in the process. It also provides advice on strengthening self-leadership, including finding your leadership sweet spot and taking ownership of your leadership.

## Highlights

While many of us assume a leadership role through diverse circumstances as a matter of course, the author makes a compelling case for raising the bar and aiming for leadership excellence, which can yield powerful benefits to all involved.

The author presents a systematic and prescriptive framework and practical guide to achieving exceptional leadership. This includes such elements as:

- Methods, techniques and tips based on experience and research
- Decision criteria and considerations
- Reflection Points at the end of each chapter, to encourage readers to further explore the concepts and project them onto their individual context and experience

Leading difficult team members, managers, and other stakeholders is an unavoidable step in the journey to leadership excellence. We have all encountered these familiar types and can relate to many of the cases the author includes. Throughout the book, he illustrates key concepts and techniques through case studies that focus on some of the most common “unleaddable” types.

## Highlights: What I liked!

I enjoyed the author’s practical, well-grounded and simply communicated advice throughout the book. The end-of-chapter Reflection Points are useful to map and adapt the guidance to one’s personal circumstances and perspective. This is material that we can all readily apply as leaders and project managers.

I am currently using the book as a source of guidance while managing a recently launched major project dealing with post-merger technology integration on a global basis.

## Who might benefit from the Book?

Current and aspiring project managers and leaders of all levels can benefit from the concepts and advice in this book. The “unleaddable” profiles described in this book are likely to be encountered across most organizations and in many projects. This book is a good source of advice that can be adapted to help us deal with these troubles on a path to excellence.

## Conclusion

To those of us who are in positions of leadership but may only be meeting expectations, as difficult as this can be in itself, the author makes a compelling argument to set the bar higher and accept the call to exceptional leadership. Effectively dealing with difficult people is a valuable skill that can help us on this journey and serve us well in our personal and professional lives.

This book provides useful practical guidance and is an important addition to the reference collection of project managers seeking to achieve their full leadership potential.

---

For more about this book, go to:

<http://www.amacombooks.org/book.cfm?isbn=9780814437605>

*Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the [PMI Dallas Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Dallas Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. Chapter members are generally mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact [editor@peworldjournal.net](mailto:editor@peworldjournal.net).*

## About the Reviewer



### **John Poulos, PMP**

Chile, USA



**John Poulos** has over thirty years of experience providing guidance on the effective use of information technology while delivering business-driven, technology-based solutions to a wide range of private and public sector organizations. In his current position as Senior Director of Cloud Services at NTT DATA, he manages strategic projects for NTT DATA/CS leadership. In addition, he delivers infrastructure and IT strategy consulting services to corporate and government clients. He is currently leading a global project to migrate 30,000 employees of a company recently acquired by NTT DATA from their original end-user computing environment to the standard NTT DATA PC image and SW configuration. In prior positions, John provided IT consulting services across various industries and geographical regions. He managed complex projects for clients in private enterprise, higher education and government. John holds E.E. and Engineering Management degrees from Southern Methodist University, MIT, and The George Washington University.

Email address: [jpoulos539@gmail.com](mailto:jpoulos539@gmail.com)