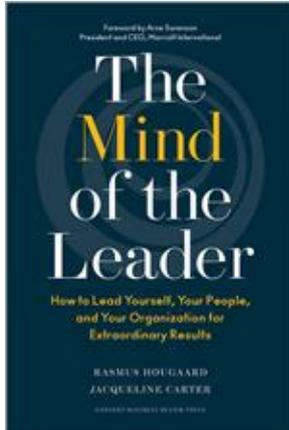


## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***The Mind of the Leader: How to Lead Yourself, Your People, and Your Organization for Extraordinary Results***

Author: **Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter**

Publisher: Harvard Business Review

List Price: \$30.00 USD                      Format: Hardback, 238 pages

Publication Date: 2018                      ISBN: 9781633693425

Reviewer: **Sheila Renee Jackson**

Review Date: September 2019

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### Introduction

The Mind of the Leader helps us answer the age-old question, “What’s on your mind?” As the authors explain in the introduction, we often see, through their actions, what is, or is not, on a leader’s mind. The authors suggest three foundational, mutually enhancing, qualities of great leadership, which they call MSC leadership. (M)indfulness. (S)elflessness. (C)ompassion.

The Mind of the Leader is a product of more than two years of research by the Potential Project around the qualities necessary for success in twenty-first century leadership and is based upon interviews and assessments of more than 35,000 leaders and 250 executives at Microsoft, Lego, Accenture, and McKinsey. The book includes an accompanying self-titled App available on Android and Apple.

### Overview of Book’s Structure

In the introduction the authors explain the three levels of leadership (Yourself, Your people, Your organization) and illustrate this concept graphically (p. 4). This graphic is used throughout with the particular chapter emphasis highlighted. The book’s three parts each detail one level of leadership using the MSC pattern. The book’s formatting consistency enhances its effectiveness; locating answers within each of the three parts is easier because of this pattern.

The capstone statement for this book might be “Leadership is less about what you do and becoming more of what you are.” Leaders who are more approachable, more relatable and more truly human are the ones who succeed. This book is a move away from leadership development’s traditional starting points of strategy, vision, and spreadsheets. Instead, the authors propose an inside-out approach with the book as

their supporting outcomes-based research. “You cannot manage other people unless you manage yourself first.” [Peter Drucker]

The Mind of the Leader is organized around three levels of leadership, with awareness as the core of each: self, people and organization.

- 1) Understand and Lead Yourself
- 2) Understand and Lead Your People
- 3) Understand and Lead Your Organization
- 4) Appendices – info on The Mind of the Leader App / Practices for Training Compassion

The structure of the book lends itself well to the book’s stated goal: “You are about to enter a movement, and we are here to support you on your way.” (p.5) Figures and graphs contribute to the reader’s understanding. Chapters include matrices around the three attributes – Mindfulness, Selflessness, and Compassion – and training exercises for realizing and cultivating these attributes. Each chapter closes with Quick Tips and Reflections, actions the reader can incorporate in becoming an MSC leader. As example, “At the end of each day, take a moment to reflect on one contribution someone made to support your success, and send them a note of gratitude.” (p.142)

## Highlights

The Mind of the Leader offers practical advice, exercises, and suggestions. This book is practical, easy to follow, and apply. The book’s findings are drawn from and supported by research that is thoroughly documented in the extensive section of notes. The authors share demonstrated outcomes from experience and cite fascinating statistics from their own and others’ research. “For over a decade, we and our colleagues at Potential Project have trained tens of thousands of leaders in hundreds of companies.” (p.3)

Here are a few favorite passages:

- “Scientists estimate that 45 percent of our everyday behaviors are driven by reactions below the surface of our conscious awareness.” (p. 32)
- “When people become richer compared with other people, they feel happier. But when whole societies become richer, they don’t. Our happiness is relative to the wealth of our neighbors.” (p. 41)
- “Selfless leadership is about acting as a teacher, a mentor, and a guide.” (p. 134)
- “We get addicted to being busy, to checking off boxes, to clearing the to-do lists. Doing so provides us with a sense of being useful and productive.” (p.135)
- “A selfless organizational culture is not about the individual, but about the collective mission and purpose.” (p.186)

- “With the power of leadership comes responsibility. Responsibility to the people and the societies we serve. They are the lives we have the power to influence, for better or worse. And ultimately, we can never blame our boss or shareholders. We carry the burden of the choices we make.” (p. 205)

Those desiring a broader range of strategies on mindfulness may consult the authors' previous book, *One Second Ahead: Enhance Your Performance at Work with Mindfulness* (2015).

### **Highlights: What I liked!**

I enjoyed the warm tone of the writing style. While the book has an academic quality, the voice of the authors is conversational, approachable, and comes from a place of good will towards the other. As example, “Attachment of any kind has its downside, but a strong attachment to an elated state often means that feelings like sadness, frustration, and disappointment will come more easily...Remember, you are only letting go of your *attachment* to pleasant experiences, not the experiences themselves.” (p. 87)

I gained understanding from the use of figures, helpful in illustrating the various concepts and chapter highlights. The authors are also consistent in defining terms to establish common points of reference. Terms such as mindfulness, focus, selflessness, and compassion (among others) are prone to interpretation so the authors define them in introducing their findings. I have highlighted and marked multiple sections for future reference and am confident this will be a book I'll read again.

### **Who might benefit from the Book?**

The Mind of the Leader is clearly written to senior leaders who have the authority through title and/or influence to affect change either personally or corporately. The third section on understanding and leading at the organizational level addresses an audience presumed to have the positional role required for organizational results. The interwoven examples that the authors cite to support conclusions are anecdotes and quotes from CEOs and executives. These personal stories emphasize how these concepts have been applied and how these leaders achieved desired outcomes.

The book references an accompanying App, however, as of this review the App is incomplete. Due to its limited content I didn't find the App helpful.

### **Conclusion**

Our society needs MSC leaders. The benefits extend outside the workplace. When we live out these attributes, we are carrying the message forward. My book is heavily highlighted. I presume others will find *The Mind of the Leader* equally motivating in their own pursuits of excellence in leadership. Because of the practical tips and exercises in MSC leadership this is a book one can refer back to in specific situations

and/or seasons. As the authors propose, “If we as leaders want to cultivate truly thriving organizations, we need to understand what really matters to human beings.” And what really matters requires our attention. Understanding begins with a mindful path to self-awareness. This path is a well-traveled, scenic journey; one we need not travel alone.

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For more about this book, go to:

<https://www.potentialproject.com/books/the-mind-of-the-leader/>

or

<https://hbr.org/product/the-mind-of-the-leader-how-to-lead-yourself-your-people-and-your-organization-for-extraordinary-results/10153-HBK-ENG>

*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.*

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## About the Reviewer



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**Sheila Jackson**, PMP, MBA, PSM-I has more than sixteen years of project management experience, in multiple industries and settings. Sheila has an MBA from the University of North Texas and a BA in Psychology from Baylor University.