



BOOK REVIEW: LEADING WITH VALUES: POSITIVITY, VIRTUE,
AND HIGH PERFORMANCE
(EDITED BY EDWARD HESS AND KIM CAMERON,
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, \$27)

—THOMAS MAIER
GONZAGA UNIVERSITY

The world is hungry for goodness, it recognizes it when it sees it, and it has incredible responses to the good. There is something in all of us that hungers after the good and the true, and when we glimpse it in people, we applaud them for it. We long to be just like them. Their inspiration reminds us of the tenderness for life that we all can feel.

—Desmond Tutu (1999, p. 263)

In light of recent corporate ethical scandals, *Leading with Values: Positivity, Virtue, and High Performance* offers leaders practical ways to achieve expected performance and profit while acting ethically and virtuously. The authors do a good job of illuminating the common characteristics of those leaders who have led others from a positivistic and virtue-based perspective. Cameron and Hess have compiled case studies and stories concerning groups that have experienced organizational success based upon honesty, respect, trust, dignity, and valuing others as essential characteristics of value-based leadership.

The book is about values-based leadership and those who lead through focused efforts of positivity and virtue to create and sustain successful organizational performance. It shares inspirational leadership stories from a variety of organizational settings including financial services companies, firefighters, the U.S. Marine Corps, and the transportation industry.



The volume is edited by Edward Hess and Kim Cameron. Edward D. Hess is the Adjunct Professor of Organization and Management; Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Corporate Growth; and Founder and Executive Director of the Values-Based Leadership Institute at the Goizueta Business School at Emory. Kim S. Cameron is Professor of Management and Organization at the University of Michigan Business School and Professor of Higher Education in the School of Education at the University of Michigan.

Leading with Values: Positivity, Virtue and High Performance is a compilation of 11 chapters about positivistic, values-driven leaders. Chapter 1 shares the success of Synovus Financial Corporation and their enduring family values and servant-leadership principles which have contributed to over 100 years of success. Chapter 2 is the story of FedEx Freight and “Putting People First” in order to successfully build a values-based organizational culture. The FedEx story provides insight into strategic leadership principles based on people-centric culture. Chapter 3 articulates the importance of devaluing negative and detrimental values in lieu of promoting positive values in high-risk organizations.

In chapter 4 we learn that the U.S. Marine Corps relies on specific leadership values, core beliefs, and a common commitment to spirituality as essential values in creating a successful organizational culture. Chapter 5 is the story of HomeBanc Mortgage Corporation, another example of the positive impact spiritual values can have within the organizational environment. The presence of a sense of meaning and of “family culture” in a publicly traded company illustrate the power of shared religious values and loyalty as means toward high performance. Chapter 6 is the success story of a small billing department at a healthcare hospital unit. Values-based leadership lessons are shared in a common practice of strong personal leadership values and commitment to people and performance. Chapter 7 is written by one of the editors, Kim Cameron; it contains his reflection upon the strength of leadership and values-based principles and their contribution to extraordinary organizational success. The story of the Rocky Flats nuclear



cleanup site is an example of “making the impossible possible by adopting an abundance value system rather than a deficit value system” (p. 140). Chapter 8 offers perspective on the Enron debacle and presents a framework leaders can use to translate their values into action.

Chapter 9 deals with “Forgiveness as an Attribute of Leadership.” Professor David Bright offers practical steps toward enhancing an organizational culture of forgiveness. The chapter addresses the relevance of forgiveness to organizations through the demonstration of case study examples at LDI Trucking Inc. In the case study Professor Bright advances the notion that the transcendent mode of deeper forgiveness has positive effects on organizational performance. According to Bright, the way transcendent forgiveness contributes to improved organizational performance is through the creation of positive mental and emotional mindsets. He contends that “positive emotions are associated with expansion of thought-action possibilities” (p. 182). Another principle he advances involves the amplifying effect forgiveness has toward the transformation of negative to positive emotions. Bright closes the chapter with practical ways leaders can exercise transcendent forgiveness. A must-read!

Chapter 10 explores organizational healing after major trauma. In this case study the essence of values-based leadership is articulated through four themes: a) building collaborative community, b) leading others to safety, c) going beyond formal roles, and d) the victim’s leadership. Finally, Chapter 11 illuminates the success achieved by the Marine Corps in leadership transformation. Marine Corps leaders share their success in building future leaders and the importance of values-based learning as a system-wide organizational culture.

Robert Greenleaf’s original writings identify certain characteristics of servant-leaders. One of these is awareness; in essence, Greenleaf explains that “self-awareness strengthens the servant-leader and aids one in understanding issues involving ethics and values.” Values-based leadership is grounded in the awareness of positivity as a means to elevate the good. Cameron and Hess heighten our understanding of the contributions positive



values and virtuous ethics play in leadership theory. They present a compelling set of principles backed by real-life case studies illustrating the ways in which leading with values can produce successful organizational performance.

Thomas Maier is an officer at an NYSE-listed Hospitality Corporation based in the Pacific Northwest. He is a guest lecturer and adjunct faculty member in both Hospitality Management and International Relations programs at major universities in the United States and Asia. He is an International Hospitality leadership speaker and researcher in the field of Positive Organizational Scholarship.