

Leadership and the art of struggle book summary essay example

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Learning about management, in theory and practice, drives the quest to be better leaders. Good management practices go hand in hand with good leadership. This paper looks at the basic summary of the book entitled, 'Leadership and the Art of Struggle - How Great Leaders Grow through Challenge and Adversity' written by author Steven Snyder. Every organization, company, and institution needs good management. However, every company or organization does not have good leadership or management. Steven Snyder's book looks at different ways how to develop good leadership skills. The book is divided into three parts. The first section is called 'Becoming Grounded.' The second part of the book is called 'Exploring New Pathways,' and the third section is named 'Deepening Adaptive Energy.' Learning how to be an effective leader or an excellent leader requires study and effort. This book summary helps to explain the elements and ideas in 'Leadership and the Art of Struggle.'

The book by Steven Snyder, 'Leadership and the Art of Struggle - How Great Leaders Grow through Challenge and Adversity,' shows its message in stages. The first stage, or section of the book, provides an awareness of what problems leadership must deal with in order to be successful. The first section, 'Becoming Grounded,' discusses the struggle to face the problems. In this first part Snyder begins the introductory paragraph by telling a story. Snyder relates how Steve Jobs of Apple first presented a Macintosh computer named 'Lisa' after his daughter. Snyder observes how Jobs' attitude is very disrespectful. The point Snyder makes from the illustration about Jobs is that a rude behavior style, is not a good leadership style.

People who are leaders fail before they succeed. Snyder is showing that

people in leadership struggle before they learn to operate as successful managers. Snyder says “ Leadership is often a struggle” (2). Snyder tries to convey that the path to becoming a good leader is not smooth. The book insists that it is unrealistic to expect that the road to learning good leadership skills is an easy one. The fact reflects that becoming a great manager involves learning. The skill set does not come automatically. Also in the book, Snyder makes a point that struggle is not a bad thing. Snyder discusses that all leaders, or people in management positions, are at different levels. In the ‘ Struggle is Not a Four-Letter Word’ part Snyder conveys a story about an effective leader named Rita Marshall. Marshall works in the level of an advertising Public Relations specialist.

Marshall had many pressures place upon her, because of the duties of her job. Many projects were delivered to her for the purpose of building a good team of employees and workers. Doubt crept in to her mind, and she began to feel inadequate as a leader. Her self-doubts slowed down progress and she did not know what to do. Organizational management theory instructed behaviors of leaders, telling them to have a positive mental outlook. In other words, leadership theory encouraged leaders to embrace a positive psychology. In the book Snyder says that this is a mistake. The reason why, he believes, is because leaders are not perfect people. Leaders are human beings and it is natural for them to struggle. Snyder suggests to persons in leadership roles that the process of learning to be a good manager involves struggle. He states “ Had it not been for President John F. Kennedy’s failure in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, he might not have gained the wisdom need to meet the greatest challenge of his presidency 18 months later” (15). The

event Snyder refers to, when Kennedy was in the Oval Office, is his brilliant handling of 'The Cuban Missile Crisis.'

Snyder's book is full of little anecdotes and stories, which help readers to understand that arriving at good (or even great) leadership skills is a process. His point informs managers that there will be a struggle to get past a poor performance, and that the difficulty is a process that people should not feel ashamed of. For example, Snyder draws attention to a situation involving Bill Gates of Microsoft. In the early days of the company Microsoft, Bill Gates had leadership struggles and hard decisions to make. One manager who worked with Bill Gates in the early days of the company saw first-hand how he grew to become better. Every leader has his or her strong qualities. Gates' strong feature identified him as a great speaker. Gates displayed a unique way to engage people's interest when he spoke. He showed eloquence, passion, and sometimes humor. Snyder's book is full of stories like this which illustrate his main points.

Snyder also names three core elements of struggle. They include: (a) Being out of balance, (b) Change, and (c) Tensions. In other words, Snyder recognizes that change is not easy. A sense of feeling uncomfortable rises to meet leaders when they try to change a wrong way of behavior. Change is never easy. Snyder lists some of the reasons that leaders worry about change. He states that leaders often feel opposition to their "vision" due to perceiving threats about losing personnel, "financial constraints, "competition in the marketplace, or recession patterns in the economy (22). Snyder explains that other leaders may worry about their internal concerns. For example, they may feel themselves inadequate or feel the need to grow

as a person. The book also discusses energy a lot.

The concept about energy guides much of the book's main topic. Snyder calls one sub-topical section of the book " Turn You Energy into Adaptive Energy." Snyder establishes the idea of having adaptive energy as being a necessary ingredient for leaders to have. Snyder says that if leaders do not have this kind of ' adaptive' energy, they may not survive in the business world of management. Everything is a process. Snyder views leadership skills as mostly acquired. Although some people seem to be born with amazing skills, they need to work on other weaker areas of their management styles. Snyder states that ' adaptive energy' must be a requirement. The reason is because such adaptive energy can help managers to develop a better skill set by using preparation, to find answers to the problems leadership will face. Snyder's book shows that he understands we all live in a very complex, modern world. Snyder repeatedly expresses that the normal world functions within a web of chaos. Snyder points readers, and leaders, towards a way wherein they can accept the turmoil which exists in the world. Snyder discusses that by an exploration of looking at new, and sometimes different, pathways managers can navigate their way towards better results. One excellent thing about the book increases managers' confidence. Snyder measures leadership potential for success by telling managers that mistakes are normal. And he tries to communicate to leaders that they can become better at what they do.

The title of Steven Snyder's book truly reflects the purpose he tries to outline. In part one Snyder basically unfurls the problems. He gets the reader to understand that the world is not particularly a friendly place. He

encourages the reader to understand that this world is full of problems and opposing factors, which will confront those in leadership. Snyder's book creates a foundation to let leaders know that even when problems exist, that they can overcome them and learn to be better managers. But, in part one Snyder is trying to convince managers that struggles are normal and you have to be willing to change. He emphasizes that the idea of change, for managerial leadership, is difficult and uncomfortable but that they can regain a sense of balance. In other words, once you realize that the process can be uncomfortable and difficult, then you can relax and release energy towards making the situation better.

After giving the reader a recognition that the world is full of troubles, which we have little control over, Snyder proceeds to outline how to explore new ways of becoming a successful leader. In part two the main sub-sections are entitled:

- "Navigate Tensions"
- "Illuminate Blind Spots"
- "Transcend Conflict," and
- "Discover Purpose and Meaning through Struggle" (94-162). In this portion of the book Snyder discusses ways to reinvent your own personhood, and that a re-examination process is needed. If you think about this idea, there is a lot of common sense involved. Snyder keeps emphasizing throughout the text that feelings of tension and discomfort are perfectly normal. The process reflects growth as those in leadership positions accept the levels of discomfort and tensions. Working through the imbalances represents great new ways to achieve future success. In other words, Snyder consistently

institutes his message by encouraging leaders to accept the feeling of struggle first. Then, Snyder tells them to embrace a new vision and reinvent themselves. For example, in part two Snyder portrays another story about Kathee Tesija, a top market executive at Target. Snyder describes her main problem. Tesija found that the market was softening, in terms of sales at Target. Her leadership position demanded to find solutions and to find out what customers wanted and needed.

Snyder breaks down the three challenges Tesija faced. The first challenge she encountered called for her to understand the problem. The marketplace had changed. Tesija needed to cope with the fact that unemployment had dramatically risen. Consumer responses shifted from previous habits of buying. Snyder names the other challenges, however his main point in the book pertaining to Tesija is the tremendous amount of pressure and tensions upon her. When a manager faces a great problem or difficulty, a sense of feeling out of control can quickly immobilize a leader's response. Snyder relates how this Target executive stepped up to the plate. She looked "under every rock" for an answer (96). She accepted the facts and embraced the need for change. Tesija helped to make the rest of the team at Target feel comfortable because she made them feel like a part of the process. Making other team members feel important, and like active change-agents, helped to re-define her leadership position. As a result, this Target executive made everyone feel needed by asking them to give ideas. In this way, all employees could help find solutions and re-ignite customers' interest in buying more products again. Of course, Snyder suggests, feelings of uncertainty and fear rose to the surface. But when things move so fast, you

have to quickly figure out ways to expand roles.

Snyder acknowledges that everyone has a 'learning curve.' The term is not new. Normally when people discuss learning curves, a classroom situation comes to mind. But managers in industry also have a learning curve to be aware of. In the book, Snyder highlights that when difficult problems arise in need of quick solutions, the manager must kick-in new ideas and patterns very fast. Snyder keeps reminding those in leadership that changes bring tension. And he says that tensions and feelings of discomfort are normal. The main idea demands to navigate through the tensions. In the book Snyder displays a diagram of what he calls 'Your Tension Map.' He places four points of interest on the map. They include identity, relationships, traditions, and aspirations. Identity, Snyder explains, represents the inner you. The relationships part of the map represents others, or the outward gaze. Tradition spotlights the styles done in the past, and the aspirations part gives the concept of future possibilities. See how it works?

What is great about the book is that the author does not pretend that everything is perfect. Snyder groups problems and difficulties together, in a way to help people in leadership to understand that challenges are real. He locates these challenges as 'blind spots,' conflicts, feelings of tension, and striving to find balance in a chaotic world. The book monitors the best ways for managers not to beat themselves up, or blame themselves for failures which already exist in the marketplace. Every manager should read this book because it mostly agrees that the duties of leadership are not easy. But Snyder gives managers a roadmap to work through tensions, fear, and uncertainty to find better solutions. Also, Snyder helps managers to discover

that they can learn from mistakes and failures. This is very important, especially in today's modern world. Management theory and practice models behaviors that emphasize achievement and success. But real-life is different. Real life slaps challenges and problems in your face daily. Management has so much to deal with nowadays. Leadership can find ways to work out the challenges.

In conclusion, Steven Snyder's book 'Leadership and the Art of Struggle - How Great Leaders Grow through Challenge and Adversity' comes highly recommended. Basically he tells about all the problems and challenges, while acknowledging the feelings of tensions and fear. Then, Snyder uses the book to help managers to think differently and how to visualize new ways to find solutions. Blind spots happen. They will occur. Conflicts will happen. They will occur. Snyder does not deny the facts. He brings them to the forefront of a leader's mind, and reminds them that struggle brings discovery. Developing creative paths to kill old habits organizes a leader's mindset to achieve success. Another great point Snyder makes is that managers can find help and support from their team members, family, and friends. He agrees that your inner-self is as important to connect with as the job. Overall, the book provides a healthy way for leaders to meet their demands.

Works Cited

Snyder, Steven. Leadership and the art of struggle - how great leaders grow through challenge and adversity. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2013. Print.

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