



## **The Heart Of Leadership- Reflections On The Rituals Of Wise Leaders**

By Robin S. Sharma

Leadership is not about the prestige of your title but the quality of your character. Real leadership is not about position, it's about action. And great leaders spend their days helping those around them manifest their highest human potential while they work towards a vision that adds value to the world at large. As I wrote in "Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari": "the greatest privilege of leadership is the chance to elevate lives."

In the new economy, leadership will be the quality that will separate the winners from the also rans. With increasing competition, only those organizations who develop leaders at every level will have the agility and effectiveness to excel in these topsy-turvy times. The organizations that rely on the outdated "top down" model of leadership will not have the speed and nimbleness to go head-to-head against competing companies where everyone understands their duty to show leadership in the way they work and live. In my leadership seminars, I show peak performers how to liberate more of their leadership potential so they see quantum improvements in their professional and personal lives. Here are 4 of the best lessons:

1. Understand that, at the end of the day, leadership is all about relationships. People will not follow you if they do not trust you. They will not invest in your products or services unless they truly feel you have their best interests in mind and sincerely care about them. Showing leadership in your work means that building high-trust, high-touch relationships is Job #1. To cultivate these bonds, peak performing leaders remember that the little things are the big things when it comes to building client loyalty. They keep their promises, doing what they say they will do when they say they will do it. They are punctual and respectful. And they are courteous, always remembering to say "please" and "thank you" at every reasonable opportunity. If you simply fill the needs of your clients, they will remain with you until someone who can do it better comes along. If you deeply connect with them on a human level, they just might remain with you for life. As I say in my seminars: "People will not lend you a hand until you first touch their hearts."

2. Remember that leaders strive for mastery over mediocrity. The quality of your professional and personal life ultimately comes down to the quality of the choices you make every minute of every hour of every day. As human beings, our highest personal endowment is the ability to choose our response to a given event. We can choose to get angry with a difficult client or we can see the circumstance as a gift - as a wonderful opportunity to deepen the relationship by dealing with the complaint in a creative, effective manner so that the client is so delighted he tells the world about you. You can choose to focus on the increasing competition, regulation and complexity of the marketplace or you can concentrate on the almost limitless possibilities offered by this wired age. One of the most important choices that effective leaders make is to raise their standards. They commit themselves from the core of their beings to being true masters at the work they do. They are hungry to learn from the best. They spend time daily refining their talents and reading from

great books. They take time weekly to reflect on the way their are conducting their businesses and course correct so the next week builds on the past one.

3. Stop doing what is easy and focus on doing what is right. Weak performers spend their time doing those things that are easy. They take the path of least resistance and do only what is comfortable and convenient. They never face their fears and make the tough cold call or give the big public presentation. Instead, they lead small lives, preferring to stay within a limited zone of security that never requires them to stretch their capacities. Bold leaders are far different. They have the wisdom to understand that the tougher you are on yourself, the easier life will be on you. When you have the courage and strength of character to do what your heart tells you is the right thing to do in every instance, rather than doing what is easy, you will raise the quality of your professional and personal life to a whole new level. As the nineteenth-century English writer Thomas Henry Huxley said: "Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not." Or as Theodore Roosevelt noted one hundred years ago, the highest form of success "comes not to the man who desires mere easy peace, but to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph."

4. Smart leaders know that the time is now. If you don't act on life, life has a habit of acting on you. The days slip into weeks, the weeks slip into months and the months slip into years. Then we wake up one day, in the twilight of our lives, and wonder what could have been. As I share in my speeches, on your tombstone, there will be two dates: the date of your birth and the date of your death. You will have had no say in the first date and no choice in the second one. But between these two dates will lie a line representing all that lies between the day you arrived and the day you departed.

Stop putting off living. Now is the time to move to the next level in your career. Now is the time to upgrade your education or learn new skills that will allow you to serve your clients better. Now is the time to enrich your mind and shed the shackles of complacency. Now is the time to go the extra mile for your customers and distinguish yourself in a crowded marketplace. Now is the time to deeply connect with your family and build great friendships. And now is the time to enjoy the journey of life - before it becomes too late. As Elisabeth Kubler-Ross said so eloquently: "It is only when we know and understand that we have a limited time on earth - and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up that we begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had."

## **LEADERSHIP THROUGH WORKLIFE BALANCE**

By Robin S. Sharma

Too many people do not discover how to live until it is time to die. They spend the best years of their lives chasing that illusory pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, working long hours, neglecting their families and their health in the process only to find that, at the end of the day, their obsessive pursuit of a fat bank account and the coveted corner office did not bring the deep fulfillment that they craved. Too many of us miss out on the simple gifts that every day brings like the glory of the sunrise or the laughter of a young child because we are so busy trying to make a living we have lost sight of the real meaning of life. Then one day, in our twilight years, we finally reflect on "what could have been" and our hearts flood with regret over school concerts missed, family vacations

not taken and magical moments lost. Perhaps Henry David Thoreau said it best when he observed "most people dread finding out when they come to die that they have never really lived."

There is nothing wrong with great achievement. Those of you who have read "The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari" or attended one of my speeches know that I believe that a life without career success and professional fulfillment is an incomplete life. We all have a deep human hunger to create something great through the work we do and shine in our chosen occupations. The point of wisdom is simply this: do not sacrifice a joy-filled life for the sake of achievement. Instead, joyfully achieve. Balance your commitment to being the best you can be at work with a deep commitment to being a great family person and loving friend. Understand that without balance in every core area of your life, you will never find lasting happiness and a sense that you have lived well. As Gandhi noted: "One can not do right in one area of life whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in another. Life is one indivisible whole."

Here are 4 areas to focus on as you move through 2000 and restore balance in your life:

1. Relationship Balance (Bold). It is a myth that "quality time" is all your loved ones need for them to feel cared for and appreciated by you. You must go the extra mile and ensure that the right quantity (*italics*) of time is also provided for the bonds of trust and love to grow. Children, in particular, believe that the more time you spend with them reflects how much you love them. In my coaching programs, one of the techniques I teach is the use of a "private date night" where you and the loved one you wish to connect with go out alone on the same evening every week for some real communication. Make it fun and playful if possible. Laughter is the shortest distance between two people and if you can make your loved one laugh, you will be on track for some healthy bonding. This simple ritual will ensure that no week slips by without you spending time with the people that matter the most. The great thing about bringing back "Relationship Balance" is that it creates a great sense of synergy in all of the other areas of your life. For example, when your home life is in fine order, you have the mental focus and peace of mind to concentrate fully on your business and create the kind of enterprise you know you are capable of creating.

2. Career Balance. Just as spending too much time away from your loved ones working will create imbalance in your life, failing to do what it takes to be an effective and excellent business person will also create stress in your days. We all have a deep human hunger to gain fulfillment through work and add value to people's lives through our career pursuits. When we are not doing so, our hearts fill with a feeling of longing and emptiness. Reflect on what 3 things you could do over the next 90 days to be a star at work. Is there a skill you need to upgrade? Are there some books you need to read or courses you need to take? Perhaps you are in need of a mentor who can offer you some strategic advice as to how to elevate your business life to the next level. Make the commitment to moving beyond your comfort zone and really improving the way you do things. Remember, the people who will really succeed in the 21st Century will be those who are the most valuable to their clients and the marketplace in general. As Einstein expressed: "Try to be a person of value rather than a person of success." In doing so, the success will be certain to follow.

3. Health Balance. One of the most disturbing things I observe as I work with individuals and organizations as a speaker or corporate coach is the fact that when people are young, they are willing to sacrifice their health for wealth. Then, years later, when they are older and wiser, they admit that they would sacrifice all their wealth for just a little bit of health. It's like that old adage says: "If youth only knew. If age only could." Health is, arguably, your most important possession for without it, a rich life is not possible. Carve out some time every week to restore Physical Balance. Exercise at least four times a week. Eat healthy, low fat meals. Drink plenty

of water and, after a stressful week, treat yourself to a massage. These activities are investments in your self and will help you be a peak performer for the long run.

4. Spiritual Balance. The philosopher Emerson said: "Without the rich heart, wealth is an ugly beggar." We all have a deep need to live for something more important than ourselves. Find a cause that you can commit yourself to. Make some time every week to serve or help those in need. Carve out an hour or two on a weekend morning to connect with the larger world around you. Spend time with nature and restore a sense of wonder about your surroundings. Think about what things you loved to do as a child and then have the wisdom to do them again. Another excellent strategy to nourish your spirit is to record all the things you have to be grateful for in a journal. Reflect deeply on the abundance in your life and regain a sense of perspective.

Remember the old Persian proverb that says: "I felt sad that I had no shoes on my feet until I saw the man with no feet." Appreciate all the blessings you have and then go out into your days with enthusiasm, energy and joy. You will never be the same.

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## **BEST PRACTICES FOR GREAT RELATIONSHIPS**

By Robin S. Sharma

"Beginning today, treat everyone you meet as if they were going to be dead by midnight. Extend to them all the care, kindness and understanding you can muster and do it with no thought of reward. Your life will never be the same again," wrote Og Mandino, the great inspirational thinker. In this age of blistering technological change where computers are obsolete the moment they come to market and business models that have governed commerce for decades have been rendered useless by the Web, one time-honored principle endures: *(Italics)* how high you will rise in business will ultimately come down to how well you treat people. The more prevalent technology becomes, the more prominent it will become to master the art of developing deep connections with the people who surround you.

You can transform the way you work and the results you see by making the simple decision to get back to the fundamentals and start focusing in building rich, mutually rewarding relationships with the men and women who are your teammates, customers and contacts. Sure high-tech communication tools save us time and make us more effective but these new forms of contact must *(italics)* compliment rather than replace the human touch and the process of cultivating relationships. Remember, technology is nice but you cannot fax a handshake and you can't e-mail a pat on the back.

Here are 6 effective lessons to deepen your business relationships and, correspondingly, raise the levels of your success and fulfillment at work:

1. Stay Focused on adding value before receiving profit. Too many people in business are consumed by short term thinking where they view a customer as a one-time source of revenue rather than as a lifelong relationship that needs to be nurtured and cared for before it will yield the win-win results you are seeking. I recently retained a graphics design firm to create a new brochure for a leadership seminar I was to deliver to a group of investment advisors. While the

quality of the brochure was excellent, the agency charged me triple the going rate for the work they did. I quietly paid the invoice but vowed never to do business with that company again. Had these people not been so consumed with making a profit from me on the first transaction and, instead, sincerely committed themselves to building a long-term relationship by treating me well and delivering far more value than I had any right to expect, they just might have had a customer for life. Had these people taken the time to reflect on the fundamentals, they would have realized that someone such as me, who spends his life as an author and speaker, would generate significant amounts of profit over the long term not to mention the goodwill I would generate for them by telling every one of my colleagues of their high quality services.

2. Keep your promises and commit to your commitments. Doing what you say you will do, when you say you would do it, in the way you said you would do it is the best way to begin to reopen your relationships and raise the level of your personal credibility with those you work with and serve. We live in a world of hype, where people say they will deliver a certain result and then, once they get the order, they never follow through on their commitment. Yet, success in business, and in life, lies in the follow-through. The smallest of actions is always better than the noblest of intentions and peak performers always do what they say they will do, even when it is not easy for them to deliver on the commitment.

3. Be Fanatically Honest. A strong commitment to working with integrity requires a daily commitment to honesty. In a crowded marketplace where customers have never had so many choices as to who they will do business with, people will drive many miles to give their business to someone who is honest and sincerely cares about their best interests. Make some time over the coming week to reflect on how often you tell little untruths and obscure minor facts. In business, as in life, the little things are the big things and your personal conduct in dealing with others is the most important driver of long lasting success. As I recommended in my book "Who Will Cry When You Die?", an excellent way to develop an "Honesty Philosophy" is to go on a 7 day "truth fast" whereby you vow to tell nothing but the truth and the whole truth to everyone you come into contact with over a one week period. This simple exercise will give you an acute awareness of how honest you truly are.

4. Be Consistently Compassionate. "Make it a rule never, if possible, to lie down at night without being able to say, 'I have made one human being at least a little wiser, a little happier or a little better this day,'" wrote Charles Kingsley over one hundred years ago. We now live in an age when we can send missiles across the globe with pinpoint accuracy but we have lost the ability to walk across the street to meet a new neighbor. We have the ability to e-mail a thousand people with the click of a mouse but we have trouble finding the time to send a handwritten note to our most valued clients. As you enrich your relationships, always remember this cardinal rule: (italics) Before someone will lend you a hand, you must touch their hearts. The people who really succeed in business are those who dedicate themselves to astonishing their teammates and customers with their daily acts of decency and through their common acts of humanity. Set aside your paperwork from time to time and write that handwritten thank you note you have been meaning to write. Make the time to take people to lunch and get to know them on a deep personal level. Have the wisdom to schedule time for those face-to-face meetings that no technology could ever improve upon. And say "please" and "thank you". Your career will never be the same.

5. Enjoy the Gifts of People. Everyone who enters your life has a lesson to teach and a story to tell. The question is not whether you can learn something from all the people who you interact with through the hours that comprise your days but, rather, whether you have the wisdom to look for the gifts that they bring. I have learned powerful lessons on life from taxi drivers and wonderful human relations skills from breakfast waitresses. I discovered one of my favorite books through a

camel driver in Dubai and learned the value of remembering people's names from a farmer from Nebraska. It is not just the so-called knowledge workers who hold all the knowledge. Open your mind to the possibilities offered by everyone who crosses your path. Remember, at the end of the day, the quality of your life will be defined by the quality of your relationships so make them your primary priority. As noted by Richard Elder in his book "If I Knew Then What I know Now": "When you are eighty, sitting on a porch rocking and looking back on your life, how will you feel? You won't have to answer to anybody but yourself... not your parents or your spouse or your business associates. What did you do with this gift of living? It will be an important question to you then so you should make it an important question now."

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[Back to the Index](#)

## **How to Become a Star at Work**

By Robin S. Sharma

The only way you will ever truly succeed in this new knowledge-based economy is to become a star at work, that is, an individual who stands far above the crowd and one who is totally unique in a world where most people are trying to be more alike. The moment you make a deep commitment to becoming a star at work and burning all your bridges to the person that you once were, your life will change in an unmistakable way. The day you decide to start acting like the person you were destined to become is the day that you begin to tap into the wellspring of human talents that will lead you to your own form of personal greatness. These are not the simple musings of yet another professional thinker spouting hackneyed euphemisms in the hope that one day someone will take note. These are the hard, cold facts of life – and they have been so for hundreds of years. And to deny them and continue living a life of complacency is to abandon your duty to do something special with your life. As Ashley Montagu observed: "The deepest personal defeat suffered by human beings is constituted by the difference between what one was capable of becoming and what one has in fact become."

To become a star at work and to start seizing some of the matchless opportunities that are out there in what I believe to be the most exciting time in the history of humanity, you first need to make the decision to raise the standards that you will work and live by. Commit to living by a benchmark far higher than anyone would have the right to expect from you. Take a good hard look at the way you spend your days and ask yourself whether your agenda reflects your priorities. If there is an incongruity between the activities you invest your energies in and the values you hope to live by, you have a problem and need to make some immediate course corrections. For example, if your goal is to have a meaningful and rewarding work experience but you devote your days spinning your wheels on mundane tasks that never advance your professional goals, you need to do refocus yourself on the things that truly count. If a rich and happy family experience is high on your list of life priorities but you have not been to your son's soccer game in a year and you cannot remember the last time you sat down to do homework with your daughter, you need to sharpen your pencil and rework your schedule. The facts never lie and the activities of your schedule will ultimately reflect the quality of your life.

The next step in becoming a star at work is to dedicate yourself to becoming "a person of action". In life there are three types of people. First are those that make things happen. Second are those that watch things happen. And third are those people who wake up one day, at then end their lives, and ask "What Happened?" Today, make a firm decision to join the first group - the group of human beings who have decided that life is a gift and every day is a new opportunity to learn, grow and contribute. As you go through this day, look for opportunities to bring a sense of excellence and mastery to your work. What little thing could you do over the next few hours to build relationships at work or make your clients say "Wow?" What mental attitudes could you adopt to reframe what is negative into positive and rekindle that enthusiasm that you had when you were just a kid? What simple gestures of decency could you do to show your teammates that you care and are committed to showing leadership in a world where real leaders are few and far between?

As I wrote in my latest book "Who Will Cry When You Die?": "the smallest of actions is always better than the noblest intentions," and today is your chance to make a difference. "There's nothing really difficult if only you begin. Some people contemplate a task until it looms so big it seems impossible but I just begin and it gets done somehow. There would be no coral islands if the first bug sat down and began to wonder how the job was to be done," noted John Shaw Billings.

Here are 7 more things you can do over the next 10 days to become a star at work:

1. Take your hero to lunch. Find someone who has created the kind of professional and personal life that you want and have the courage to take them out to lunch. If there is an author you admire and she lives in your city, pick up the phone and ask for a meeting. If you just read an inspiring article about someone who had turned adversity into advantage and you know you can learn from him, send out an e-mail and open up the lines of communication. In this new knowledge economy, the person who learns the most wins. Learn from heroes.
2. Set "learning goals." Most wise performers on the playing field of business set career, financial and personal goals but few set specific learning goals. For this year, I have set clear objectives as to how many books I will read, how many seminars I will attend and how many personal growth retreats I will visit. I also try and set a daily learning quota of three new things every day to keep me stimulated and excited about my work as a professional speaker and leadership coach.
3. Become indispensable. While working at a major league legal firm after I had completed law school, I asked one of the senior partners what one had to do in order to become successful at this firm. His response has never left me and has been exceedingly helpful. "Robin," he said, "the real secret of success is to be so good at what you do that this firm will not be able to run without you. Be so good at what you do that you are the first person that we all think of when we need advice. Be so good at what you do that you become indispensable. Then your success will be assured." So my challenge to your is this: pick your best three talents - 3 core competencies that you have that truly make you special - and then commit to refining them over the coming twelve months until they set you apart from the crowd. Make a personal vow that you will become so good at your professional craft that you become indispensable to your team and to your organization as a whole. Then watch your career soar.
4. Make time to think. It is a strange paradox of the frenzied age that we live in that we have become so busy that we do not even have time to think about the things that we are so busy about. We spend our days on projects that need to get done and in meetings that need to be attended. We spend our evenings with people we need to meet and doing activities that need to be completed. But let me ask you? When was the last time you went for a solitary walk in the woods

and deeply reflected on the way you are working and living? When was the last time you took a few hours to gain some real clarity into where you want to be professional and personally five years from now? Henry David Thoreau said: "It is not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The question is what are you so busy with?" Carve out at least one hour every week for some serious reflection, introspection and self-examination so that you will keep learning from your weeks.

5. Start a reading group at work. If you want to be a leader, you must first become a reader. Knowing how to read and not doing so puts you in precisely the same position as someone who cannot read. We live in an age where ideas – not bricks and mortar - are the currency of success. One idea, well executed, can transform your team, your culture and your entire organization. One idea, read in a single book, can reshape your thinking processes, transform your character or renew your health. Here's the thing: you just don't know which book contains that one idea that will revolutionize your life. But believe me, it is out there. And it is waiting for you. Read daily and ensure those around you to do the same. The company that learns together stays together.

6. Look like a star. Get serious about physical mastery. Commit to being in peak shape so you increase your energy levels and enhance your stamina. Rekindle that healthy glow that comes from running or swimming or going for a brisk walk at lunch. And make the time to dress and conduct yourself in a way that conveys your commitment to excellence, not only in business but in life.

7. Think contribution. We all have a deep human hunger to be a part of something larger than ourselves. We all carry within us a core craving to do something important in our work lives and know that, at the end of the day, our energies have been invested in activities that have added value to the world and made a difference in people's lives. Begin to see the higher meaning of the work that you are doing and stay focused on adding value to others. As the 13th Century philosopher Rumi said: "When you are dead, seek for your resting place not in the earth but in the hearts of men."

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[Back to the Index](#)

## **The Power of Personal Regeneration**

By Robin S. Sharma

The primary duty of every human being is to evolve into your best self. Every day of our lives presents with opportunities to experience, learn and grow. The wise person recognizes this and commits himself to the inner work required to constantly expand ones personal frontiers. In my own life, I try to spend as much time possible in the process of self-examination. I try to figure out what I am doing right and, perhaps more importantly what I am doing wrong so I can make those all-important course corrections to improve the way that I work and live. The goal of all this "innerwork", is to continuously recreate myself into the person that I have always dreamed of becoming.

Here are a number of particularly effective strategies that I encourage you to use in your own life so that you can actualize you highest self and become the leader you are destined to be:

1. Get Clarity: The essential starting point for recreating your life is to gain clarity on what outcomes you desire. Take out a piece of paper and write a few paragraphs outlining what you want your life to look like two years from now, personally, professionally and even spiritually. Then list all of the barriers you must overcome as well as the skills you must develop to get you to this destination. I also recommend that you set about defining your 90 day, 180 day and 360 day goals in the following areas: Personal Development, Family and Relationship, Career and Financial, Social and Network and your Adventure/Fun goals. I have personally prepared my goals in these area on four sheets of paper that I call my "lifemap" and I revisit these on an almost daily basis to keep myself focused and dedicated to my highest priorities. When you know what activities offer you the best return on your investment of time, it is easier to say no to the things that do not count.

2. Create a Dream Team: You become your environment. In my own life, I am very careful as to who I spend my time with. I try my very best to surround myself with people who are passionate, principled, peaceful and dedicated to doing great things. I also look for people who are innovators and intelligent. In spending my time with such individuals, some of their brilliance rubs off on me and I gain insights which help me live a richer life. I also try and spend my time reading from the best books, learning from the best magazines and going to seminars where I learn cutting-edge ideas for personal mastery. As David Schwartz noted in his wonderful book "The Magic of Thinking Big", "go first-class in your environment" so that you become an inspired thinker who makes a difference in the world.

3. Kindle the Fire of Self-discipline: It is impossible to create a great life without self-discipline and dedication. The good news is that we all have an enormous capacity to be disciplined. If you are finding that your will power is at a low point, it is simply because you have not accessed the abundance of self-discipline which resides within you. Once you cultivate your self-discipline, you'll find that you have the energy, stamina and focus to do all those things that you know you should be doing to create a great life. The three best ways that I know of to build self-discipline are as follows: 1) get up early, 2) finish what you start and 3) do the little things that you don't like doing but know that you should do.

4. Grow Aware of Your Focus: As I say in my leadership seminars, what you focus on grows, what you think about expands and what you dwell on determines your destiny. A great book to read on the power on mental focus and how it shapes your world is James Allen's "As A Man Thinketh". The fact of the matter is that your life five years from now will be determined primarily by the thoughts that you were thinking and the actions you are taking. If you focus on what is not working in your life, you will find that those negative perceptions will grow and invade your mind. If, however, you focus on what is working and the high points, more will enter into your world. I encourage you to take a few minutes every few day and write a gratitude list of all the good things that are currently in your life. Detect the positive things and you will begin to notice that they expand in your awareness. For example, note the fact that you are healthy, have good friends, live in a great country, can access wonderful wisdom, and have the opportunity to enjoy a sunrise once in awhile. By engaging in the art of gratitude, you will shift your mindset into one of abundance and prosperity.

5. Be Gentle With Yourself: All too often, we are hard on ourselves if we do not create the life we want as quickly as we know we can. Life and personal expansion is a process. We are all works in progress. Do not expect perfection of yourself only excellence. If you make a mistake, understand that this is a gateway to growth and a chance for you to grow. The real key is to turn

your stumbling blocks into stepping stones towards higher awareness, greater leadership and more fun along the journey of your life. As always, I wish you well.

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