

Four Critical Books for Leadership

Vidal Martinez, Ed.D

July 2, 2017

After reading more than one-thousand books, ten years leading volunteer firefighters, thirteen years as a college administrator, a life-long teacher, parent, and now a manager, I have identified four critical books leaders must read.

Keep in mind that I define leadership as the ability to be relevant and to influence people and organizations. Being relevant and the ability to influence will help you in all aspects of your life, to include: family, work, friends, recreation, spiritual, and community. It took me some time to pinpoint the four most critical books for leaders and here they are.

A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose by Eckhart Tolle

How can one lead without an analysis of oneself? Many years ago, I found this book on Oprah's Book Club, and it had a huge impact on my life. I had to read this book several times until I understood ego-based consciousness and how one's life purpose is important to happiness. Eckhart Tolle describes what it takes to have a fulfilling existence, and the book will make you ask important questions about yourself and your leadership abilities.

How to Think like Leonardo da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day by Michael J. Gelb

Although this book gives good historical information about Leonardo da Vinci, Michael J. Gelb does a superb job of defining the seven Da Vincian principles. All leaders must practice the curiosity approach, questioning conventional wisdom, sharpening the senses, embrace uncertainty and ambiguity, whole-brain thinking, balance body and mind, and systems thinking – all attributes for leadership.

Mastery by Robert Greene

What can I say about Robert Greene? One of my favorite writers, his book – *Mastery*, gives the reader an honest, straight-forward reality check on what it takes to master something. He doesn't hold back as he describes the stages of mastery, finding your life's task, the ideal apprenticeship, the mentor dynamic, social intelligence, the creative-active, and the ultimate goal – achieving mastery. This book made the list because leaders must be masters in their field.

First In, Last Out: Leadership Lessons from the New York Fire Department by John Salka

Some of the best leadership examples come from the fire service because fire service leaders cannot negotiate with fire. In his book, John Salka describes lessons to lead, motivate and inspire people. Although his lessons revolve around the fire service, they can be applied to any organization. This is a powerful book and should be a required read for leaders in any industry.