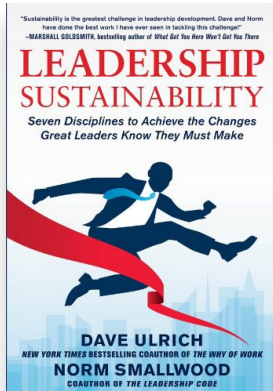


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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Leadership Sustainability

THE NUTSHELL

McGraw Hill Education 2013

How do leaders sustain their desired improvements? Most of the leaders we work with know the importance of leadership for their organization's success. Most also want to be better leaders, and this leads them to adopt personal improvement goals, to participate in training and development activities, and to invest in the leadership of others in their organization. But we believe that many leaders are at a point of diminishing returns by focusing only on the why and what of leadership. By shifting attention to the how, leaders emphasize finding ways to sustain desired improvements.

From various yet related literatures, we have culled seven disciplines that instill leadership sustainability: Simplicity, Time, Accountability, Resources, Tracking, Melioration and Emotion. These seven disciplines spell the mnemonic START ME. We think this is apt because for each of us, sustainability starts with me. These seven disciplines turn hope into reality. Leaders who apply these disciplines go beyond the why and what of leadership to reach the how.

Simplicity

Leaders sustain change when they enact the discipline of simplicity in the face of complexity by making strategic assumptions about the future that allow them to take the best course of action today. You can simplify the path forward for yourself and for your organization through three principles of simplicity: (1) Focus on what matters most, (2) Tell stories, and (3) Avoid concept clutter.

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Time

How we invest and spend our time defines who we are, what we believe, and who matters most to us. A leader who really means to get outstanding results must invest time on the things that matter most and not be sidetracked by peripherals.

Accountability

Accountability must occur in both thought and action for leaders. At the personal level, accountability deals with ensuring that leaders keep their word and do what they say they will do. Leaders also increase individual accountability throughout the workforce by finding ways to motivate and engage employees. At the organization level, accountability increases when leaders create systems and practices that focus, drive, and reinforce employee behaviors and organization actions.

Resources

Leaders who know why and what they should change are more likely to accomplish their desires when they have the support of those around them. Ultimately, leadership is a team, not an individual activity. Isolated actions are more difficult to sustain because they lack support. Thus the most important resources for leaders to access are human resources, both for themselves and for their organizations. It turns out that when desired behaviors are reinforced by personal coaching and institutionalized in human resources practices, they are much more likely to be sustained.

Tracking

You really do get what you inspect and not what you expect. Furthermore, people really do what they are rewarded for, so it is pointless to hope for one thing while rewarding another. These axioms apply to sustaining both personal and organizational change. To sustain organizational change, it is necessary to track organization processes and their outcomes and see if they lead to desired outcomes. For personal change, leaders must measure their behavior and its results. Without solid metrics that specify what should be happening in terms that can be counted and tracked, your aspirations for the organization you wish to lead or the leader you wish to be are just that— aspirations, something that would be nice to have but is not likely to become a reality.

Melioration

For leaders to sustain desired changes, they have to meliorate, or improve, build on strengths, and learn. Effective leaders are pioneers who seek a direction, not a destination and move forward with values to reach that direction. Like jazz improvisers who make beautiful music, leadership pioneers start with a simple idea and experiment with it to make it work.

Emotion

Leaders who want to sustain behavioral change are more likely to succeed when the desired behavior is aligned with their emotions. It is estimated that as many as 80% of decisions are made by emotion, yet when they hope to improve their decisions, leaders tend to focus more on knowledge

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than on feelings. When coaching, training, performance management, and 360-degree sessions include emotions, not just facts, leaders personalize and claim the changes they intend.

Leadership sustainability is not just a personal trait that makes some leaders inherently better than others. It is a set of disciplines that leaders can consciously master to help them do what they know they should. For each of the seven disciplines that constitute leadership sustainability, we have identified a metaphor that captures what effective leaders do to sustain their desired change:

- **Taxonomist.** Sustainable leaders create simple taxonomies by focusing on the critical items that have the largest impacts.
- **Time logger.** Sustainable leaders manage time as their most critical resource, using their calendar to make sure that they really devote their attention to the things that matter to them.
- **Responsible adult.** Sustainable leaders take personal and public responsibility for their actions and are accountable for the results they get.
- **Teammate.** Sustainable leaders work together to combine unique resources into collective results through coaching and systems.
- **Tracker.** Sustainable leaders track their progress to know how they are doing and to see how today's actions will predict tomorrow's outcomes.
- **Pioneer.** Sustainable leaders constantly learn and grow, being resilient in the face of failure and humble in the face of success.
- **Meaning maker.** Sustainable leaders recognize the value and power of their own emotions and build emotion and meaning in others.

To build leadership capability in an organization, leaders need to share why leadership matters. They also need to help every leader take personal responsibility to improve. They need to help leaders define what effective leadership means. Leaders of others also have to weave leadership sustainability into the fabric of the organization. They do so by making leadership sustainability part of the organization's leadership capability.