

## Leadership from the Inside Out - Are You the Leader YOU Would Follow?

When you hear the words “Leadership from the Inside Out,” what comes to your mind? When I have asked this before, people have responded with very differing views and meanings. In this book, I want to share with you what “Leadership from the Inside Out” means to me, how I see it differently than most, and why I feel that implementing the 7 Traits found in this book will CHANGE your life—and your world.

There is so much included when we use the term Leadership, and it could even mean different things for different people. The traditional dictionary definition goes something like this:

*“Leadership is the position or function of a leader; a person who guides or directs a group. It is in management, administration, directorship, control, governorship, stewardship, authoritativeness, influence, command, effectiveness, sway and clout.”*

Leadership encompasses all of these definitions. But it is my personal opinion that they have neglected to list the more powerful and more personal parts of being an Exceptional Leader. I believe that a true leader develops qualities and attributes that they hold as a standard, and then exemplify those qualities such as:

- honor
- integrity
- inspiration
- gratitude
- confidence
- influence
- courage
- motivation
- service minded
- strong character
- filled with lasting love
- exceptional excellence
- strong beliefs and values
- trustworthiness and dependability

As you can see, while the dictionary focuses on outward functions of a leader, I have a different perspective on this topic. From my own experiences, I know—and absolutely believe—Exceptional Leadership starts from the inside and moves outward.

In the world of business and society, a manager manages, a governor governs, an administrator administrates, and a director directs. In the same fashion, an Exceptional Leader leads—and they lead through loving example. Everything about this person is honorable and we all want to be more like them, because they truly care about others. To be that Exceptional Leader, we must show it through our efforts to improve ourselves.

**“Real Influence Begins with you and is Developed from the Inside Out!” ~Kris Barney**

Leadership is not a destination but an ongoing quest. A person will never just arrive at a point and say, “I am done.” In fact, it is quite the opposite. Think about a leader who you admire. Have they ever stopped working to improve themselves? NO! Leaders strive to grow and master skills that provide opportunities for improvement and success. This ongoing effort is a change in mindset, a shift in belief, and a willingness to make it a way of life. Exceptional Leaders focus on continuous improvement and personal development. Learning new behaviors and skills builds quality leadership, and they share it everywhere they go.

As our Leadership is developed, our influence expands, and we become influential to others. To have a profound impact, you must be willing to continually evaluate and find areas for growth and development.

- As you grow and move forward, your influence expands.
- As your influence expands, you become an impactful leader.
- As your leadership improves, your organization becomes stronger and more profitable, your relationships improve, your health improves, and you truly love your own life.
- Your success is incredible in all areas of your life, and things more naturally tend to go your way.

**Change** from the Inside Out is how this is created! When we are willing to change, and strive for higher goals and a more defined way of life, we naturally become a Leader.

Think about it. . . **Are you the leader that YOU would follow?**

When we become the leader that we would follow, that is when influence and effectiveness meet. It takes honoring ourselves, and believing in, and being a steward of—our own self.

Let me be clear—you can be a more powerful and influential leader by believing in yourself, staying in impeccable integrity, and holding yourself to higher standards. Taking responsibility for yourself truly does make a profound difference.

When we look back through history, and we strive to find those who have been of highest influence, we see that many of our greatest leaders had all of these qualities and values—and lived them from the Inside Out.

Think of Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, Walt Disney, St Joan of Arc, George Washington, Zig Ziglar, Tony Robbins, and Jim Rohn. This is, of course, just a tip of the iceberg of the influential people who have left a lasting legacy. They have truly had a profound impact on our society and the world.

I am sure that you have your own list of outstanding leaders and treasure what they mean to you. Think about what a difference just these few people have done to make your world different and better. Think of the incredible impact these Exceptional Leaders have had, and the profound difference they have made in the lives of literally thousands and thousands of people. Can you imagine what would happen in our world if even 10% of the population exemplified these phenomenal traits and modeled their lives after Exceptional Leaders?

On the flip side, there are some extremely successful people who really did have it all—EXCEPT for living the inner qualities that establish true leaders. These were popular personalities, who perhaps said it, but did not live it. It is very likely that they were a wreck on the inside and it showed up on the outside. Think of Tiger Woods, O.J. Simpson, or Lance Armstrong. Even huge business icons like Enron's collapse, or even Pan Am Airlines. I am sure that this list could go on forever.

It is not my intention to bring attention to the negatives that came of these, but it proves that when we build our leadership on a solid basis of character, values, and principles—or from the **INSIDE OUT**—we have sustained success and happiness. We are more effective and more productive in all areas of our life! We become the kind of leaders that others naturally follow. **WE BECOME THE LEADER WE WOULD FOLLOW!**

Exceptional Leadership does not come in a pill you can take. Your beliefs, values, and principles cannot be borrowed or forced from someone else. You must develop them deep inside of your being as part of the core of who you are.

Other people can influence you to strive to be better—to be all that you can be—and they can motivate you to want those killer results. But it truly does come down to YOU doing the work, implementing what you have learned, and taking your life to the next level. YOU MUST OWN IT! You get to continually up-level and improve yourself to greatness. Owning it becomes second nature once you have implemented the work, and have created the belief behind it.

Let me ask you this: “As a leader, company, family, or individual, do we typically change when things are going well?”

The answer is no. No, we do not. Change needs a catalyst.

- We change when we are at the end of our rope.
- We change when the going gets tough.
- We change when there is too much pain to continue doing things the way we have always done them.

Why not make the decision to change your own life before the pain is too heavy, or before you feel it is broken? Why not strive for excellence because that is what motivates you? Do you realize that as you change, people respond better to you? They begin to see more of your qualities, because that is what you are showing them. I realize that this is pretty heavy stuff, but it is the ugly truth. We have to be willing to really look at it for what it is.

The truth is—we all respond better to influence than authority. Authority is never the winner when compared to Influence. A person who is compelled to action by one in authority will only do the bare minimum; whereas a person who is inspired to take action by an influential leader, will do their personal best. This is because the leader’s influence has become an integral part of those they lead.

We all hate to be forced to do something we don’t really want to do. It leaves us feeling powerless, and we generally avoid situations and people who make us feel this way. We despise those that try to force us to do things—even if what we’re being forced to do is essentially good for us. We do not like being forced period.

But we thrive in an environment that allows us to follow influence. We will go to extreme lengths to do anything asked of us, if the person asking is influential and a good leader. The best leaders we will ever have are those who live life by example—those who hold it in their heart, who stand for what they believe, and live up to their values—those who live from the Inside Out!

To become an Exceptional Leader, I believe there are 7 Traits, that if learned and applied, will CHANGE YOU. They will change your Life—and your World. I have found people who have not only become strengthened and empowered, but have complete transformations, and exceptional success in their life, and in business, when they apply these 7 Traits. This book is a compilation of those 7 Traits—the very same traits that I personally incorporated into my own life when the going got really tough in my world. And I continue to use these traits daily to propel my life forward.

I share these traits with you in the form of a frank conversation. In this book, I share in-depth definitions of each trait, and how to incorporate these traits easily into your life. You will read several personal stories to show some of the ways I learned these traits, and how they have become a huge part of who I am. This was not something I dreamt up overnight. In fact, it came through many years of extremely difficult circumstances in my life. It came from difficult trials and struggles, all while being a multiple business owner, a mother, a wife, and a woman still keeping it together.

I have been a real estate investor, a businesswoman and entrepreneur for 35 years. I am also a business investor, and I am currently an owner of three successful Corporations.

I have trained hundreds of clients one-on-one, and have spoken to tens of thousands from stage. I have furthered my education in not only college, but the school of hard knocks. These 7 Traits have come from years of personal development, and thousands of hours in trainings and conferences. They have been developed through mentoring and training hundreds, if not thousands, of people. These 7 Traits are something I know to be true and I am excited to share them with you.

Here are the 7 Traits you will be learning. The first word of each trait is an acronym, used to describe the trait. You will learn more about these acronyms as you read about them in the chapters:

- SHOW Sincere Service
- GROW in Genuine Gratitude
- CREATE Courageous Confidence
- EXCEL in Exceptional Excellence
- LIVE in Lasting Love
- CONNECT with Complete Communication
- IMPLEMENT Impeccable Integrity

There is not a particular order with the above list, but what I can tell you is that as you develop these traits from within yourself and implement them in your life, the other traits show up on the outside. You will find that creating excellence on the inside, also creates exceptional success on the outside! You become a person of influence and inspiration rather than a person of authority. Isn't that what we really want anyway?

I'd like you to go back in time with me to June, 2012. My oldest son and I were in the doctor's office. They had taken us back to a room and sat us down. They said the doctor would be in shortly.

The brain surgeon walked in shortly after. He was a young, confident doctor, and had become very familiar with us over the past several months. He walked over to the other side of the room, faced us, and then leaned back against the counter before crossing his legs at the ankles. That's when I noticed the tear in his eye. He looked us in the eyes, and with deep sadness and regret said, "The brain tumor has grown back." **For the THIRD time in just five months!**

This cannot be happening! How much can one child handle? How much could I handle? How could this be? All I could think was, "Holy Crap! How are we EVER going to be able to handle this?"

By this time, my son had turned 26 years old, but this was a far cry from our first onset of trouble. Our family had been through some really hard times before, and it had shaped us for what lied ahead.

For many years in my life, I wondered why these tough challenges just kept piling up for us. But it wasn't until after this one that I finally put some common denominators together to understand what an impact these difficulties had on my life. How was I able to keep going when unbelievable challenges came our way? Things started to come to mind and fall into place to make more sense of why our family had faced so many tough challenges. I began to see a bigger purpose and discovered that perhaps I had been being taught something that I should one day share. ☒ Since you are reading this, I would have to say that this day has come.

So many times, I had family and friends say things like, "How do you seem to always get the big stuff?" or "Seriously, again? Is it really happening to you guys again?"

Don't get me wrong—all along I knew we had some huge hurdles. Yet I was always able to find others who were facing challenges that I could not imagine trading places with, or even contemplate what it would be like to have to go through their challenge.

I knew many people who were not as blessed as we were, yet I also knew that we had gone through more than our fair share, and I found value in knowing that there was a bigger picture. There was a reason why we had been given these tough challenges. And if we would just trust, listen, and share our experiences, it would benefit others. I wanted to find a way to believe that by sharing our stories and the lessons we learned, others could be served. They could learn new ways to handle things and discover tools that would have a bigger impact in their lives. They could learn new ways to look at things, or just learn to have a different focus. After all, perhaps all that we had gone through was not in vain, right?

As I reflected back over the years of difficulties and challenges, I was able to see how we have grown and learned from each one. Believe me, there were definitely some years in there when I could not see through it. I became victim to my circumstances, and it really cost me during that time. I paid a heavy price for those times I wallowed in disbelief and despair. I know firsthand what true depression, at its deepest core, feels like—and how debilitating it can be. I have spent sleepless nights contemplating if this life is really worth living. There were times when I wanted to give up and hide from the world, in fact, I remember a short stretch of time where I did hide. I stayed in my bedroom and thought I could shut out the world and it would get better. There was even a time when I felt everyone would be better off if I were not alive. Those were really dark times for me and for my family.

There are still times I wonder if it would have been better to go back and erase those years, or at least pretend for everyone—including myself—that they did not really exist! I have wondered if somehow people would respect me more if I continued to keep quiet, hoping that nobody ever really saw the authentic real me and my failing moments. But what I have found is that by being authentic and true, I have become more relatable. And I have been able to assist so many more people because I have been willing to put myself out there.

I know, and believe completely, that I am stronger now because of my challenges. I know how profound the pain of depression and self-hatred can be, and what kind of battles one must fight to just get through the day. It is through unwavering trust that I write this all into a book. I fully trust that it will assist others along their journey to find true happiness—through love, joy and peace.

I know deep within me, that I have gone through really tough trials to understand how a person could feel that way, or to have the feelings completely overtake them. In my pain, I knew all the right answers. I knew how I should feel or what I should tell people when they asked. I knew how to hide my true feelings and fears, and pretend that everything was just fine.

I was the queen of stuffing my emotions to the point that I did not cry publicly or show emotion—to the extent that I was even referred to one time as an ice queen! This was done publicly in front of over 50 people that were my peers and it was pretty tough to take. At first, it made me very angry. After all, that man had NO idea what I had gone through.

He had no idea the trials I had been going through over the past five years. I was dealing with adoption, my oldest son with a brain tumor and cancer, my daughter's head not growing and her need for head reconstruction surgery, and my husband's ATV accident and head injury. Then there was the difficulty of having a family of six, and living in a camping trailer for an entire year while building our home, because we incurred a debt in excess of \$80,000 in medical bills from the past year—requiring us to sell our home and move into the RV, and my need to become the general contractor after my husband had his head injury. But what had put me over the top was the very recent and horrific suicide death of my own twin brother. How dare this man lecture me!

On the outside, it looked as if I had it all together, yet inside my head, I was a complete wreck! For a long time, I thought it was entirely my own fault. Yet what I learned, is that for many years, the stories I told myself were complete lies. I allowed my horrible self-talk and negative feelings to become my reality. These negative thoughts were not allowing the good things to even get into my head.

What I have found in my journey to get to this point is that I am not alone in the overwhelming feelings and the self-doubt. I was not surprised that others, too, had similar feelings and fear. I was amazed to discover that most people shared these same feelings on some level. I was not alone, but rather more common than not.

As I have mentored hundreds of people who are also struggling in their own lives,, I have found many commonalities with them.. I have also discovered that implementation of these simple, yet profound traits, would cause immediate change in their situation, and create such a different outcome for them. I knew I had to make this available for others to easily access it, and to create a plan that could immediately improve their lives and create a substantially new focus—a way to change their lives from the Inside Out.

If you want to see significant change in your life, you must be willing to make significant changes. I have heard that a person is the result of the five people they spend the most time with in their life. Look at your own life, and ask yourself who you spend most of your time with, and if they are where you aspire to be? ☒

Maybe it's time to "clean out some cobwebs," or even let some people in your life stop being such a priority? Maybe it is time to step up your game and spend a few more evenings out where you are able to rub shoulders with others that are where you want to be. We are all creating our own reality. We are creating our lives by the choices we make. Is it time to make some different choices?

I share these incredible 7 Traits to CHANGE YOU, Your Life, and Your World. It has been through implementation of all seven of these traits into my life, on a consistent basis, that I have been able to ultimately see light at the end of the tunnel, some days. They have even given me the ability to see a rainbow on a more difficult stormy day, and find treasure within those days when I know it is not within my control to change what is happening. I can have peace as I trudge forward with faith, knowing that I am doing my best and I am being valiant in my efforts—that I am enough.

Do you really believe that you are enough? Are you being valiant in your efforts?

When I live these 7 Traits, my life is full of happiness and joy. I am able to feel whole and complete, and know what a difference I am able to make in other people's lives. I can share with others what I have learned through many years of challenges and thousands of hours of education and effort. I am having a profound impact—and this is my mission.

It makes my heart happy to know that by sharing my story, other people have an opportunity to avoid some of their own pain, and are able to move forward faster. Through my sincere vulnerability and willingness to share with you my hardships, pain, and even failures, I am able to give to you a piece of hope. I desire to give you strength to continue on, to empower you to keep going, and to give you ideas of how you can do it differently—perhaps even inspire you to focus on life in completely new ways, even though none of these traits are new ideas.

As you join me, and implement these 7 Traits, your life will begin to change. Your attitude will improve. Your relationships will reach new levels. You will accept yourself and begin to trust yourself completely. You will know that you are Enough—just the way you are! You will find joy in the things all around you, and you will cherish your life at new levels. You will improve relationships with your family and see improvement and success at work. Trust the process and allow it to work for you. I invite you to take the steps necessary and be open to doing things a little differently—to have All Things Possible in your life!

It takes courage to create change. It takes personal accountability and follow-through. It takes determination. It also takes believing in yourself, your brilliance, your worth and deciding that you are responsible for your future and for your happiness. Leadership is always more effective when we live the 7 Traits and we live them from the Inside Out. Our influence expands and our lives flourish as we become the Leader that we want to follow!

**“It’s the little things that we do on a consistent basis that will ultimately change our lives!” ~Kris Barney**