

18

Leadership
Books for
Every Stage of
Your Career

Torch



Becoming a great leader isn't a destination. It's a continuous journey.

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Throughout that journey, there are countless ways to improve yourself on a personal and professional level - regardless of where you are in your career. This development can come in many forms, from learning to connect with others on a deeper level to understanding how to work with different personality types to simply practicing more vulnerability.

But how exactly do leaders acquire these skills? And how can they put them into practice? One of the best ways is to seek out leadership coaching and mentoring opportunities. These relationships can help you hone in on and develop the competencies that matter to you. But it's not enough to only attend weekly sessions with your coach or mentor - there's work that needs to be done outside of those sessions as well.

Leadership books are a fantastic way to supplement the coaching and mentoring you're already receiving. These valuable resources have the power to expose you to new ideas and how they might support your role as a leader. But with so many different types of leadership books out there, it can be overwhelming to figure out where to start. That's where we can help.

In this ebook, we share our favorite leadership books for every point in your professional journey - whether you're early in your career, a seasoned executive, or taking on a brand new role at a company. For each recommendation, we outline what the book will teach you, why it may be helpful at a specific point in your career, as well as potential discussion questions you can bring up during your next coaching or mentoring session.

Don't feel like you need to limit yourself only to the books that are listed in your specific career stage. Everyone's leadership journey is unique, so feel free to pick and choose whichever books resonate with you!

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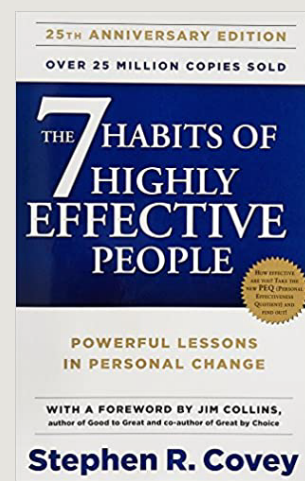
Early Career

Stepping into your first leadership role can feel overwhelming. There's a huge learning curve that comes with managing other people and being in a decision-making role. This is the perfect time to start establishing the foundational ideas of leadership - from understanding how to have tough conversations to making sure you adopt the right mindset for professional and personal growth. The book recommendations we share in this section are a reflection of these priorities.

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7 Habits Of Highly Effective People

Stephen Covey | Published in 1989



In *7 Habits Of Highly Effective People*, Covey touches on a common societal problem: why many individuals who achieve high levels of success still struggle with feelings of inadequacy. He comes to the conclusion that it all has to do with our own perceptions which, in turn, shape our behaviors. To fundamentally shift our perceptions, he recommends seven habits that will help people become more effective and successful.

Why we recommend this book:

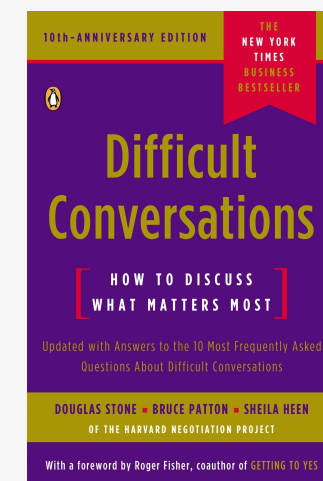
Even after almost three decades, *7 Habits Of Highly Effective People* still remains one of the most widely recommended leadership books of our time. It's easy to see why, as the concepts in the book are still highly relevant and fundamental to developing good leadership skills. It's a great read for those who are early in their careers and want to start off on the right foot.

Potential discussion questions:

- Which of these habits do you already practice?
- Which of these habits are ones you could improve on or introduce into your life?
- Did this book change your perception of what it means to be successful? If so, how?

Difficult Conversations: How To Discuss What Matters Most

Douglas Stone, Sheila Heen, Bruce Patton | Published in 1999



Everyone has to face difficult conversations at some point in their lives - whether it's at work or in our personal lives. This book offers a guide on how to effectively navigate those tough conversations. Instead of viewing difficult conversations as something to avoid or be afraid of, the authors encourage us to view them as learning opportunities and share recommendations on how to do so.

Why we recommend this book:

We highly recommend this book for those who are early in their careers to learn how to manage uncomfortable conversations in a productive, healthy way. This is especially helpful in a work setting, where a salary negotiation or disagreement with a colleague are likely to happen at some point. Being able to practice the skill of navigating difficult conversations can save you tons of potential stress and damaged relationships down the road.

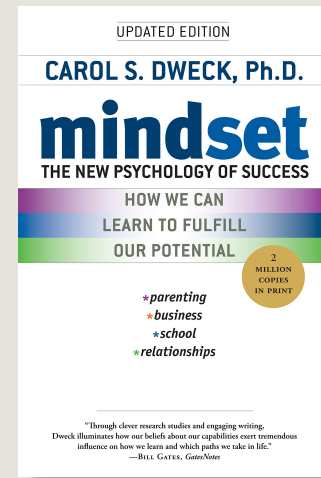
Potential discussion questions:

- When was the last time you had a difficult conversation, and how did it go?
- What are some learnings from this book that you could have applied to your last difficult conversation? How would it have improved the situation?
- What are the key takeaways that you plan to apply to future difficult conversations?

Early Career

Mindset: The New Psychology Of Success

Carol Dweck | Published in 2006



In this book, Dweck explains how mindset can play a huge role in your success. She identifies two distinct mindsets that people tend to adopt:

- A growth mindset, which is when you believe skills can be cultivated with effort
- A fixed mindset, which is when you don't think you have the power to change your abilities.
- Dweck presents evidence to show why a growth mindset is the one that will ultimately lead to the most success.

Why we recommend this book:

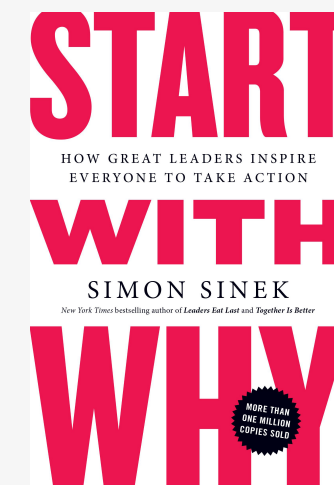
The mindset that you carry with you at work can have a huge impact on your outcomes. That's why we recommend leaders read Mindset as early in their careers as possible. It'll help you identify and improve in the areas where you might have a fixed mindset so you can unleash your potential as a leader. Leading with a growth mindset is also crucial to helping your people with their personal and professional development.

Potential discussion questions:

- Do you have a growth mindset or a fixed mindset?
- What are some examples of times you've exhibited either one (or both) of the mindsets?
- If you have a fixed mindset, what are some strategies you can apply to shift to a growth mindset?

Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action

Simon Sinek | Published in 2009



In Start With Why, Sinek explains what makes certain leaders and organizations more innovative and successful than others. The answer, according to him, boils down to answering the "why" before the "how" or the "what" - a theory that is supported by real-world examples throughout the book.

Why we recommend this book:

This book provides a useful framework for leading successful teams and organizations, and it's one that can be traced to many successful companies today. It may be helpful to familiarize yourself with these ideas early in your career so you can put them into practice as your leadership responsibilities grow.

Potential discussion questions:

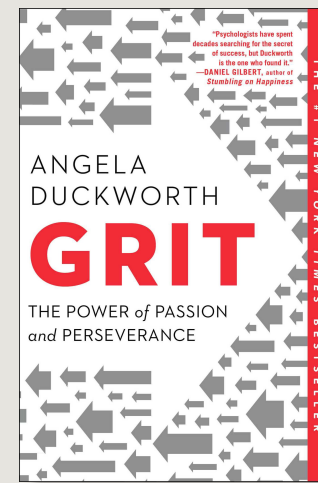
- Do you agree that the "why" is more important than the "how" or the "what" when it comes to leadership? Why or why not?
- Has your organization answered the "why?" If so, what is it?
- Do the leaders you respect start with "why?"

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Early Career

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance

Angela Duckworth | Published in 2016



In this book, Duckworth unpacks years of her research, which shows that grit - the combination of passion and perseverance - is what truly sets people apart when it comes to success. She explains why grit is so important and what you can do to develop this trait.

Why we recommend this book:

It may not shock you to learn that passion and perseverance are important elements to achieving success. But it may be helpful to understand the science behind it, not to mention that the recommendations Duckworth provides throughout her book are ones you can carry with you throughout your career - especially during the challenging moments you face as a leader.

Potential discussion questions:

- How do you feel passion and/or perseverance have contributed to your personal and professional success?
- Do you feel like passion or perseverance is lacking in any aspect of your career?
- Are there any leaders you look up to who embody the idea of grit? If so, what are some examples of times they've exhibited grit?



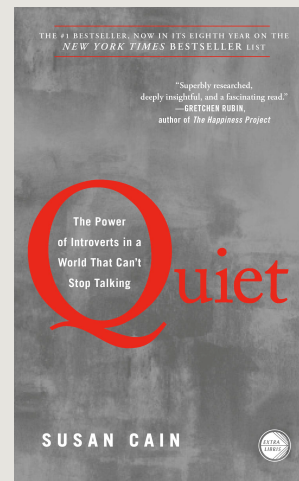
Mid Career

When you first step into a leadership role, you spend a lot of time thinking about your own development. Once you're a few years in, it's time to start thinking about the other side of the equation: the people that you lead. Specifically, it's important to understand how to lead diverse groups of people, build productive teams, and generally lean into your ability to empathize with your employees. We shared recommendations for the top books to help you accomplish this.

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Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World Where People Can't Stop Talking

Susan Cain | Published in 2012



In her book, Cain explores the cultural evolution that has led us to hold up extroverts as the "ideal" personality type. She then explains why introverts shouldn't be ignored and are actually largely undervalued in our society, pointing to successful introverts as examples. Hopefully, this book will help you change the way you view introverts and - if you're an introvert yourself - how you see yourself.

Why we recommend this book:

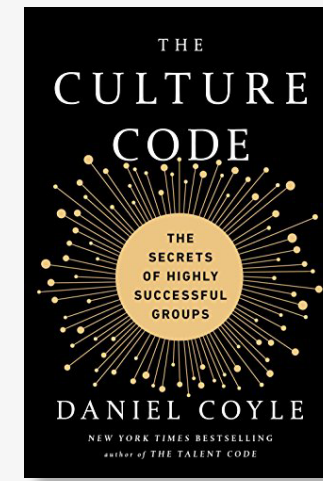
You likely have introverts on your own team. It could also be that you yourself are struggling to understand how to lead as an introvert. Regardless of the reason, we think this is a great read for people who lead different personality types and want to understand how these differences can be used to benefit the team or organization.

Potential discussion questions:

- Before reading the book, did you feel that extroverts were more "valuable" than introverts?
- How have your thoughts changed? Do you have any introverts on your team? If so, do you think they struggle with the same problems introduced in the book?
- What are some ways that you plan to leverage the power of introverts on your team?

The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups

Daniel Coyle | Published in 2017



The Culture Code explores group dynamics - of various sizes and structures - to better understand what makes for great teamwork. Coyle then analyzes and breaks down the top skills that he believes are needed for great team performance and cooperation.

Why we recommend this book:

To build successful teams, it's important to understand how group dynamics work and how - as the leader of the group - to facilitate healthy cooperation and productivity. We believe this book provides one of the most in-depth overviews on this topic and is a great way to improve your skills in team building.

Potential discussion questions:

- How has this book changed the way you view teamwork?
- Are you implementing all the skills that Coyle believes are essential to strong teamwork? If not, which ones could your team use improvement on?
- Recall the last time you saw an example of poor teamwork. Which of the skills were missing, and how could the situation have been improved?

Mid Career

Purpose Driven Leadership: Building and Fostering Effective Teams

Brigette Tasha Hyacinth | Published in 2017



This book serves as a great “how to” guide for building high-performing teams. Hyacinth covers topics from choosing the right team members, creating a shared vision, investing in the development of your employees, and more. There are also tips on how to build and manage remote teams, which is a particularly relevant topic for leaders today.

Why we recommend this book:

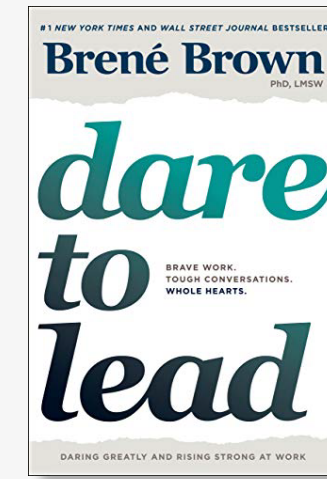
We think this is a great book for leaders who are looking for more tactical or concrete guidance on how to effectively build teams. While the other recommendations in this section focus more on ideas and concepts, Purpose Driven Leadership is a step-by-step guide for anyone who wants more support on the execution side of things.

Potential discussion questions:

- Which of the steps from the book are ones that you plan to implement in your own team-building efforts?
- Did any of the steps seem particularly challenging or overwhelming? If so, why?

Dare To Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.

Brené Brown | Published in 2018



In Dare To Lead, Brown explains how to cultivate braver, more daring leaders. In other words, leaders who practice vulnerability instead of pretending to have the right answers, hoarding power, or avoiding difficult conversations. She uses actionable strategies and findings from her latest research to show you how to embed the value of courage in your company culture.

Why we recommend this book:

As leaders, it’s natural to feel pressured to show up as your best self all the time. But, as Brown points out, it takes more courage to say “I don’t know” or “I’m having a hard time.” We recommend this book so you can better understand what it means to be a daring leader, which can then help you open up to receive deeper relationships and better conversations.

Potential discussion questions:

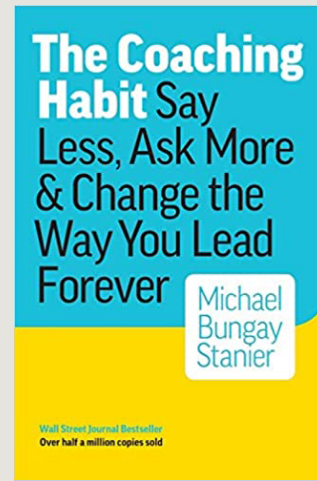
- How could being a more courageous, daring leader benefit the people you lead?
- What practices can you apply to your current role to become a more daring leader?
- What aspect of being a daring leader feels the most challenging or intimidating? Why?

Mid Career

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The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change The Way You Lead Forever

Michael Bungay Stanier | Published in 2018



In this book, Stanier encourages leaders to make coaching a regular part of their day-to-day to get the most out of their teams. To provide guidance on how to do so, he distills the fundamentals of coaching into seven key questions. These prompts can be easily incorporated into everyday interactions to improve relationships, problem solve, and encourage development.

Why we recommend this book:

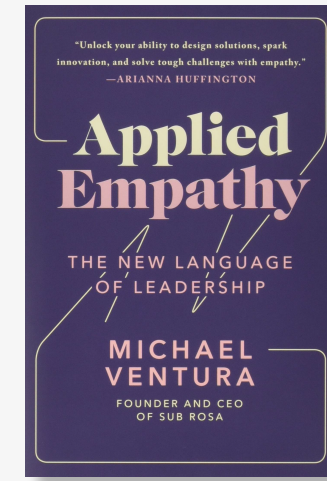
Coaching is one of the most powerful ways to encourage behavior change and positive self development. That's why, at Torch, we encourage leaders to seek out coaching for themselves. But there are ways that you, as a leader, can also bring the benefits of coaching to your own people - and this book is a great starting point to learn how.

Potential discussion questions:

- Which of the seven key questions resonated with you the most?
- What do you think are the benefits of incorporating coaching methods into the way you lead?
- What benefits do you personally receive from your coaching sessions, and how can you provide the same experience for your team?

Applied Empathy: The New Language Of Leadership

Michael Ventura | Published in 2018



Contrary to popular belief, empathy isn't about being "nice." Rather, as Ventura shares in his book, empathy comes from a place of understanding and is a path that leads to powerful leadership. To help you understand how to apply empathy in your role, he shares strategies to help you gain a deeper understanding of your customers, your people, and yourself.

Why we recommend this book:

Empathy is a critical skill for all aspects of life - including the workplace. Without it, it becomes much more difficult to cultivate relationships, manage teams, and grow as a person or professional. That's why we believe this book is so important for leaders, in particular, who are in a position to apply empathy in an impactful way in their roles.

Potential discussion questions:

- Did this book change the way you view empathy? If so, how?
- What steps could you take to cultivate more empathy within your own team?

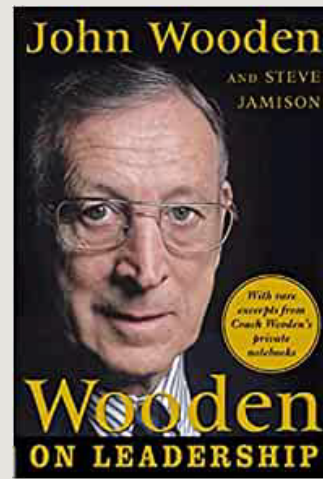
Late Career

After years of overseeing different teams at companies, you've likely mastered the foundations of leadership and developing your people. At this point in your career, it may be valuable to explore the different approaches to leadership that are out there - including those practiced by some of the most highly respected and beloved leaders of our time. The books below may inspire new ways to lead or simply provide a fresh perspective while working through problems or obstacles.

Torch

Wooden On Leadership: How To Create A Winning Organization

John Wooden | Published in 2005



Wooden is known for being one of the greatest American basketball coaches of all time as well as an inspiring leader. In this book, he shares his top 12 lessons in leadership and outlines the mental, emotional, and physical qualities that are needed to build a winning organization.

Why we recommend this book:

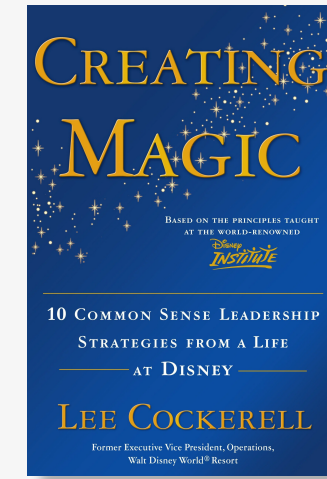
Even though Wooden's career was in the sports world, his leadership lessons are timeless and applicable to any role or industry. This is a great read for people who are looking for guidance, inspiration, or motivation from a highly-respected and successful leader.

Potential discussion questions:

- How does Wooden's leadership philosophy compare to yours?
- What do you agree or disagree on when it comes to his leadership lessons?
- Which leadership lesson was the most thought provoking for you, and why?

Creating Magic: 10 Common Sense Leadership Strategies from a Life at Disney

Lee Cockerell | Published in 2008



Cockerell, who ran Walt Disney World Resort operations for over ten years, shares his secrets for creating "magic" in organizations - all of which are centered around delivering outstanding levels of leadership. He shares simple and straightforward leadership strategies to help people improve their effectiveness at work, at home, and in their communities.

Why we recommend this book:

At this point in your career, it can be helpful to read about leadership stories of successful individuals like Cockerell. Not only does it give you a 360 view into the mistakes they made and lessons they learned, but it can also inspire new ways for you to approach your own role as a leader.

Potential discussion questions:

- Did any of Cockerell's stories or strategies stand out to you? If so, which ones and why?
- Did the book change your opinion on any leadership-related topics?

Late Career

Torch

Open Leadership: How Social Technology Can Transform the Way You Lead

Charlene Li | Published in 2010



This book helps leaders understand how to operate in an open, authentic, and transparent way in a time when social technologies are dominating the way businesses are run. Yi shares her best recommendations on how leaders can familiarize themselves with and adapt to the world of social networking and other technological advances.

Why we recommend this book:

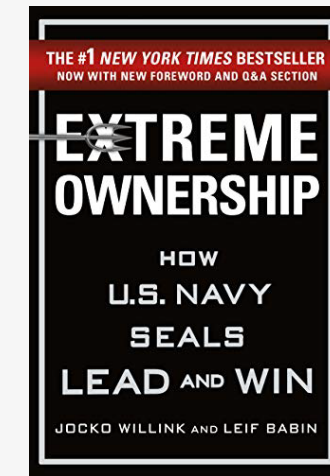
Running an organization today looks very different than it did ten years ago thanks to the rise of social technology. We recommend this book for all seasoned leaders so they can understand how to navigate this new world, where they're expected to balance being open while still maintaining control of their organization.

Potential discussion questions:

- How have social technologies changed your role as a leader?
- Do you utilize social media to represent yourself as a leader at your company?
- What are the biggest upsides and downsides to the prevalence of social media?

Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win

Jocko Willink and Leif Babin | Published in 2015



Willink and Babin, two former U.S. Navy SEAL officers, explain the mindset and principles that enable SEAL units to accomplish the most difficult combat missions. The book then details how to apply this information to any team, organization, or leadership environment.

Why we recommend this book:

Extreme Ownership provides a unique take on leadership, and it has transformed the way many people think about their roles. We encourage seasoned leaders to read this book in an effort to expose themselves to the new ideas that are presented in it, which may reshape the way you think about the way you lead your teams or organizations.

Potential discussion questions:

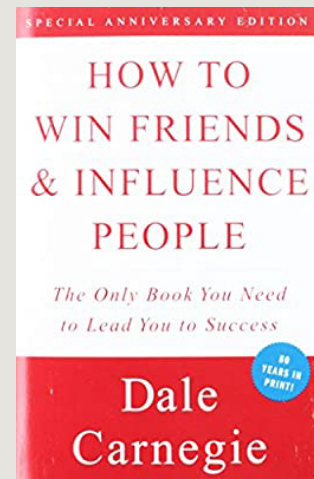
- After reading this book, what are your thoughts on the concept of extreme ownership?
- What surprised you most about this book?
- Do you think the extreme ownership approach makes sense in your own role or organization? If so, how do you plan to implement it?

New Role or Company

The books we recommended in this section will help you thrive in new environments - whether that's by helping you quickly develop deep relationships or understand the purpose of your role in an organization or community. You can use these books to guide you when you're looking for a new role, accepting a new job, or undergoing a major career change.

How To Win Friends And Influence People

Dale Carnegie | Published in 1936



Carnegie's book is one of the most widely-recognized readings on the topic of building relationships and connecting with others. How To Win Friends And Influence People teaches you how to interact with others - from making them like you to influencing their behavior or opinions.

Why we recommend this book:

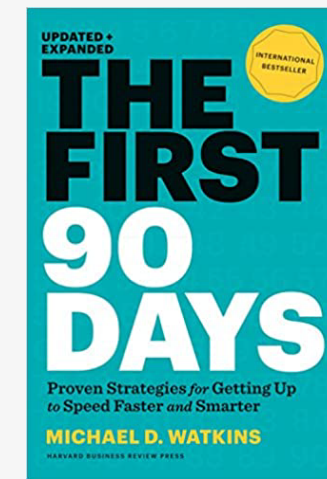
Building authentic human relationships isn't rocket science. So we love that this timeless book touches on very simple, but impactful recommendations with the goal of connecting better with others. This book is great to read (or review) before starting at a new job or company - especially if you're feeling anxious about the idea of making new friends and colleagues.

Potential discussion questions:

- ✓ Which of Carnegie's principles are the most challenging for you? Which ones are the easiest?
- ✓ How do you think you can apply the ideas from this book to settle into your new role faster?

The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter

Michael Watkins | Published in 2007



In this book, Watkins discusses the importance of the first 90 days of any career transition and presents strategies for new leaders at all levels to succeed. The purpose of these strategies is to have the most impactful first 90 days and to shorten your overall learning curve in a new role.

Why we recommend this book:

Any type of career transition - whether it's a promotion, new role, or lateral transfer - can feel nerve wracking. That's why we recommend The First 90 Days for anyone undergoing these changes. It'll arm you with the strategies you need to feel confident going into a new position and ensures that you'll make a positive first impression.

Potential discussion questions:

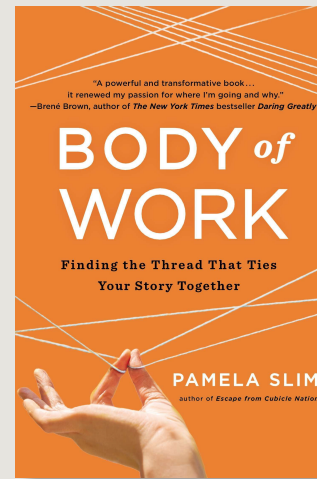
- ✓ What are some concerns you have about your upcoming transition, and did this book address any concerns?
- ✓ Which of the strategies presented in the book do you plan to utilize in your new role?

New Role or Company



Body Of Work: Finding The Thread That Ties Your Story Together

Pamela Slim | Published in 2013



These days, it's common to have a diverse range of roles and experiences in one's career - from working in a corporate job to becoming a freelancer to taking on volunteer work. In her book, Slim explains how you can make the connections between your diverse accomplishments, reinvent yourself, and tell the holistic story of your brand.

Why we recommend this book:

This is a great read for anyone making a career transition, but especially for those who might be going into a completely new industry or type of job. Slim's book can help you create a cohesive narrative around your experiences - instead of discounting them as "irrelevant" to your new position.

Potential discussion questions:

- Do you feel like your set of personal and professional experiences told a cohesive story? Why or why not?
- What do you want your brand or story to be in your upcoming role?
- Did this book help you discover a sense of cohesiveness in your career? If so, how?

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We hope these recommendations inspire you to continue your pursuit of personal and professional growth - even outside of your regular coaching and mentoring sessions. These are truly impactful leadership books that we believe you can return to over and over again throughout your career.

Remember: it's important to do more than just read through this list of recommendations. We encourage you to discuss them with your coach, mentor, and peers to gain even more benefit from them and better understand how to apply them to your everyday role.

If you're interested in learning more about how our leadership development platform can help you throughout your career...

[**Request a demo**](#)