DONATUS THÖNE
prof. JAN DE VUIJST
STANCE RIJPMA bc.

illustrated by
ERIC J. COOLEN

LEADERSHIP IN
the Picture

On the basis of current definitions of leadership, we would have to conclude that today's leaders are either not up to par or the definitions are incorrect.
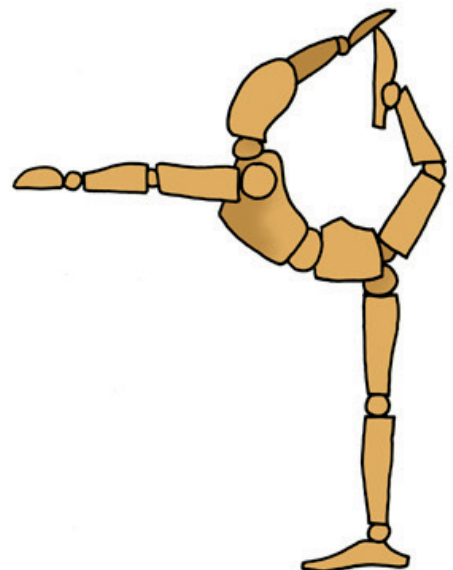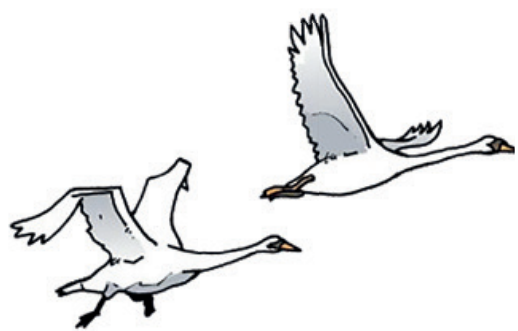
DONATUS THÖNE
prof. JAN DE VUIJST
STANCE RIJPMA bc.

illustrated by
ERIC J. COOLEN

LEADERSHIP IN
the Picture

What is this book about?

About leadership ...

*Pffhh, not another book
on leadership!*

*Okay,
let's check
it out ...*

Content

Whatever happened to
social distancing?
Someone is not setting a
very good example!

Preface
The How, What and Why of this Book

Leadership is the deciding factor: the difference between progress and blundering on, resolution and wavering, well thought-out action and haphazardness, collaboration and dissension. It has been the deciding factor for centuries, and leadership is as crucial today as it ever was. Moreover, increased global connectedness and transparency have brought into sharper focus the difference between leaders who truly understand what is expected of them and those who fail to rise to the challenge, and made it immediately visible to everyone. It has become increasingly clear that leadership is a combination of art and skill, in teams, departments, companies, countries or even global regions.

Why another book on leadership?

Each new era has its own outlook on leadership, and often its own leadership books and training methods, too. It seems that every generation has to rediscover what leadership is or should be. On the basis of current definitions of leadership, we would have to conclude that today's leaders are either not up to par or the definitions are incorrect.

Regardless of how our views on leadership have changed over the ages, some recurring themes have survived or become even more prominent. For example, the idea that leadership is about people and cooperation between them, and that there is always an element of personal leadership and self-reflection involved. A particular time or culture may call for tight management according to a plan, goal or vision, while another may require a focus on social connections, yet another may call for maximizing the capacity to learn and so forth. This means an ongoing evaluation and recalibration of the essence of leadership: What was it again? What else is possible in leadership?'

50 years of leadership evergreens

This is a book for both new leaders and seasoned leaders, as well as for anyone interested in personal leadership. It is an anthology of 'evergreens' and leadership lessons accumulated during our 2 x 25 years as coaches, trainers and educators at leadership training institutions and universities all over the world. This book offers readers a range of our key theories, lessons, insights and experiences. In addition, it invites you to reflect on your own leadership qualities: 'How do I lead people? What kind of leader would I like to become? Which role suits me in this culture and in these times? Which qualities am I going to develop further, and in conjunction with whom? Do I still know why I'm on this path? What is it that I want to learn? What should I stop doing and leave behind? What am I going to preserve and what am I going to change? What do I stand for? May this book be a valuable companion on your quest to free up the full leadership potential that lies hidden inside you.

Why a comic book?

Today's learning calls for a different approach from the ones we've come to take for granted. Traditionally, leadership is a profession with a fondness for the spoken and the written word. The combination of pictures and narrative, however, is gaining recognition again as an effective teaching and training tool. That is why we decided on a comic book, a story told in words and pictures. We think that this metaphor of the journey of the leader, together with the stories we are about to tell, will help us convey complex subject matter insightfully.

Our vision of tomorrow's leadership

We are concerned about the growing - or resurging - trend towards divisive leadership that pits people against each other, incites them, designates scapegoats, brushes aside justified complaints, lies and deceives in order to denounce anything that isn't in its

own interest. All for the glory of the 'strong' man or woman, often an angry child in a grown-up body.

We feel that tomorrow's leadership should be able to build bridges in this highly polarized world. To us leadership stands for what connects people, for cohesion within and between groups united around a plan, goal or vision. This connecting type of leadership requires self-knowledge and modesty, both of present and of future leaders.

What else can you expect to find in this book?

Leaders try to realize a plan, goal or vision in conjunction with and for the benefit of other people. The way in which they go about this has always been the subject of much analysis, with models, blueprints, protocols and procedures as tangible results. In some cases, the blueprints and protocols have become the core components of the leadership approach in question. In our view these blueprints and protocols aren't guidelines, let alone directives, but should function as a reminder of what may be going on. To us the core of leadership still is and will remain working with people, a view that is increasingly shared by others.

That is why this book pays special attention to what working with people demands of a manager, a leader. People with habits and talents, emotions and idiosyncrasies. With desires and fears, aversions and energy, doubts and - thankfully - above all the enormous ability to collaborate, to have a good time and achieve goals together. People have all those capabilities, and many more, and this applies to leaders as well as to the people they happen to lead.

Leadership is a shared task, rather than one person's job. Although the leader holds a special position that comes with specific responsibilities, he or she can only lead if the whole group feels sufficiently challenged and has the support it needs to achieve

things and to navigate a particular course. A leader without followers is a voice in the wilderness, while followers without a leader are at best a motley crew. Leadership is therefore the task of an entire group of people, all with their own unique positions and responsibilities, mutually influencing each other constantly, even when idle for a moment. This is why group dynamics is among the topics we address in the book.

Leaders learn by doing. You don't become a leader simply by reading a book, just as going through the motions on dry land won't turn you into an accomplished swimmer. You can, however, prepare yourself for your first jump into the deep end of the leadership pool. That's what books are for, then and now. We take our readers into a comic book story about a leader named John who, as the story unfolds, is faced with just about everything: challenge and disappointment, fear and pleasure, colleagues and loneliness.

The examples we present are based on actual leadership cases from our respective careers as managers and consultants to a wide range of companies and organizations. Many of the events described will be instantly recognizable to experienced managers – apparently, we all face remarkably similar dynamics on our personal learning trajectories towards leadership. These dynamics are the topic of a whole body of leadership literature and the object of scientific study. Any reference we make to their findings are meant as illustrations rather than prescriptions, however. After all, each model has only a partial relationship with reality. It is this reality in which the leader has to operate and come to often weighty decisions, all too frequently at extremely inconvenient moments. The leader makes these decisions not only based on theory, knowledge and reasoning, but also - especially - based on intuition. Be that as it may, when it comes to the crunch the leader

is on his or her own, unable to hide behind theories: it's the leader who makes the decision and only time will tell if it was the right decision. If it was not, an open admission of failure can be the mark of true leadership: 'I should have handled that differently, I will have to adjust my course.' Not a comfortable situation to be in, surely, but then the ability to operate out of one's comfort zone is, in our view, a a leadership prerequisite.

The interconnection between the chapters

We assume that leaders will have to operate out of the comfort zone (chapters 1 and 2), where they will be confronted with emotions (chapters 4 to 7). The way our story's hero John operates as a leader influences his staff members (chapter 3), just as he in turn is influenced by their reactions. Learning how to lead and lead change are basic skills for any leader (chapters 8 to 10). In chapter 11 we explore the 'N-shape' career path. Rational thinking is not the only component of leadership. Empathy and self-reflection are key requirements for the further development of one's intuition (chapter 12).

In chapter 13 John finds out that a 'strong leader' isn't necessarily a good leader. Another key realization is that the fight-flight-freeze response isn't the only available reaction to sudden change: the SCARF theory is a valuable tool here (chapter 14).

Transactional Analysis helps John to become more aware of the different positions people can assume in communication (chapter 15).

Leading people also implies the ability to recognize when to be both a generalist and a specialist (chapter 16). Strategy is a primary tool that helps the leader to understand the broader context of the organization and the goal of specific actions (and hence the why of certain decisions) and justify them (chapter 17). If a leader doesn't have good communication skills, however, not a lot will happen, whatever the decision. The ability to ask the right questions,

and to listen, are essential skills for any leader (chapters 18 to 21). It is also vital for a leader to ensure that a proper work-life balance is maintained (chapter 22).

In chapter 23 John finds out that simply announcing a new rule is not enough to bring about the intended change.

Feedback is an important tool for leaders (chapter 24), while creating security (chapter 25) is just as indispensable.

During their careers leaders will be confronted with conflict (chapter 26). For next generation leaders the ability to coach their staff members will be key to retaining them for the company (chapter 27).

How a leader can get his team in order is the subject of chapter 28, while chapter 29 shows the importance of trust in yourself and others.

At the end of the day the leader will have to offer people a perspective. It is this perspective that gets people going, helps them to persevere and work together to turn a plan, goal or vision into reality. Not merely because the leader says so, but because it is said in such a way that makes all involved eager to contribute.

Red pages

In the past, one way of looking at leadership was the 'trait theory', a theory devoted to the characteristics of a leader. Although this theory is no longer seen as a useful point of departure for a definition of leadership, it is still worth looking at the characteristics that, through time, its proponents or the leaders themselves considered important. On the red pages that intersperse the book you'll find a brief summary of the defining traits of (in)famous leaders.

Covid-19

In this book the Covid-rules of conduct are assumed to be observed, in the office, in the field, at home or wherever a scene takes place, even if the illustrations suggest otherwise.

Woody

In our comic book story Woody is John's coach. Woody represents the various internal and external coaches, supervisors and guides that we encounter over the course of our lives. That is why Woody, while present throughout the book, remains a faceless friend.

We wish you a happy journey, while enjoying reading and learning about leadership, with John and Woody as your guides.

Let's get started ...

about his life and in particular his career

18
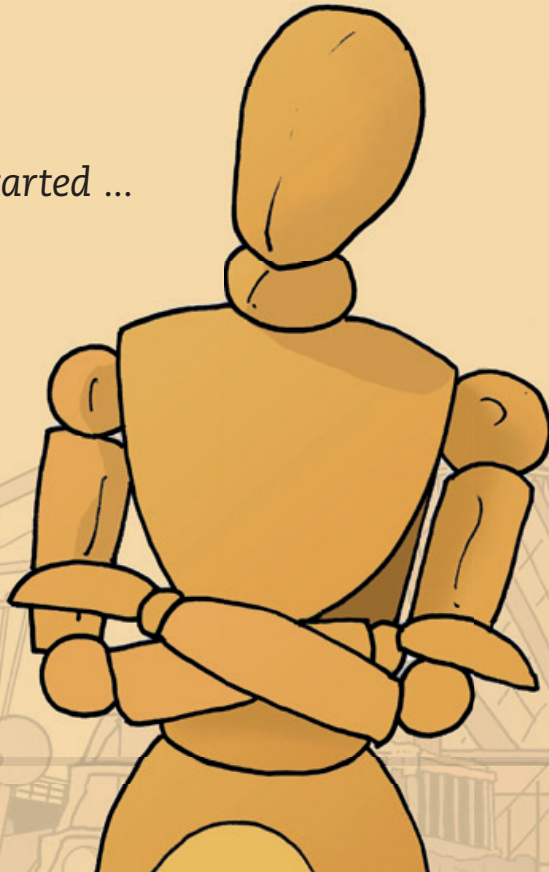
This story is about John, about his life and in particular his career, with all its ups and downs. John has got things sorted out pretty well. He has a great girlfriend, he's healthy and sporty, he feels good and has a nice job that leaves him time for leisure activities. Although ... recently his job satisfaction has been waning. That is why he has engaged a coach - Woody - with whom he has planned a series of sessions.
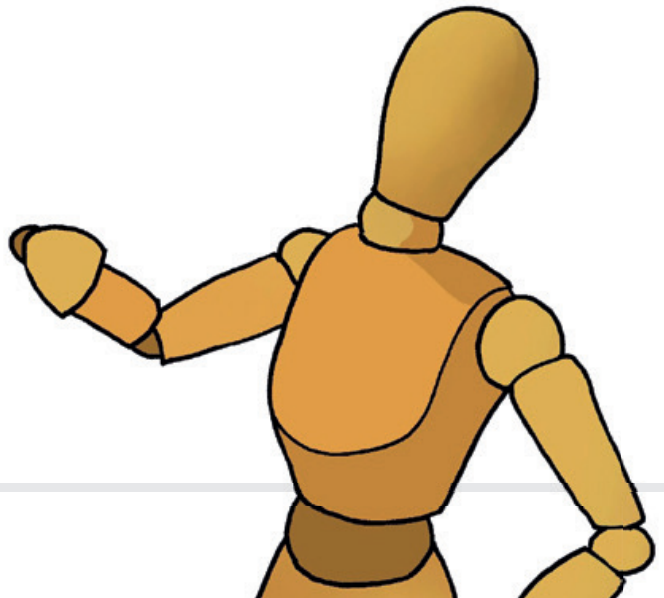
The thing is

things have not been going smoothly

The thing is, things have not been going smoothly for John at work recently. He is not happy with the way the division he works for is being managed. There are too many operational surprises and overlaps. John thinks it's just a question of better structuring, tighter planning and working harder. On top of this there are drastic changes ahead: two business units are to be merged to meet the requirements of new external financial backers.
Both units have their own auxiliary departments - John works at one of them - that will have to be downsized and face a new division of tasks.

Chapter 1 Leadership? What is it?

What is going on here?
John thinks that leadership is a simple concept. Just hand him the reins and he'll take it from there.

Why is this important?
Studying the development in the history of leadership shows us how complex leadership is. Our tentative conclusion may be that leadership is too complex to fit into a single theory. The burning question is: what makes a good leader?

What is the pitfall?
The biggest pitfall for John and all other rookie leaders is the tendency to think they understand what leadership is, and that it consists of a set of behaviors they can easily copy.

What does the theory say?
In his book *Leadership*, historian and author James MacGregor Burns offers a fine definition of what he sees as leadership: "Leadership is where leaders induce followers to act for a certain goal that represents the values and motivations - the want and the needs, the aspirations and expectations - of both leaders and followers."
MacGregor identifies two forms of leadership: 'transactional leaders', i.e. those who do the job, and 'transformational leaders', i.e. those who, through their own transformation, transform the organization or society.

Further on you will learn what Google expected from managers in 2009 and what, according to a survey conducted by David S. Brown in 1964, employees identified as ineffective leadership.

What are the implications for leaders?
The type of leadership required has changed throughout the ages, with the present multitude of leadership theories as a byproduct. The need for certain leadership styles

changed as a result of circumstances such as famine, war or prosperity, but also due to changing political views (depending on whether God, the king, the people or some other institution were regarded as the highest authority) or ethical judgments (e.g. all people are created equal, diversity vs. racial segregation, primacy of shareholder value vs. customers and employees).

Obviously, over the years, useful definitions and theories of leadership have been brought forward, but how useful are they in practice? What is the present consensus on what makes a good leader? Just look at the leaders presently acting on the world stage. Why are they leaders, and to what extent do they fit the theoretical models?
An online search of the query 'What is leadership?', will give you over one billion hits within a quarter of a second. Clearly there are many different opinions on what leadership is or should be. To quote Burns again: "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth." We may in the end have to conclude that we are in fact unable to clearly define the traits of successful modern-day leadership. We advocate practical leadership: You can only find out what kind of leader you are once you start to lead and gain hands-on experience. If you can remain open to what others think of your leadership, you will be able to expand your leadership qualities with the help of self-contemplation, modesty and the theories you find useful.

Suggested reading
Brown, D. S. (1964): *Subordinates' Views of Ineffective Executive Behavior of their Managers.*
Burns, J. MacGregor (1978): *Leadership.*
Garvin, D. A., A. Berkley Wagonfeld & L. Kind: *Google's Project Oxygen: Do Managers Matter?,* Harvard Business School Case 313-110, April 2013.
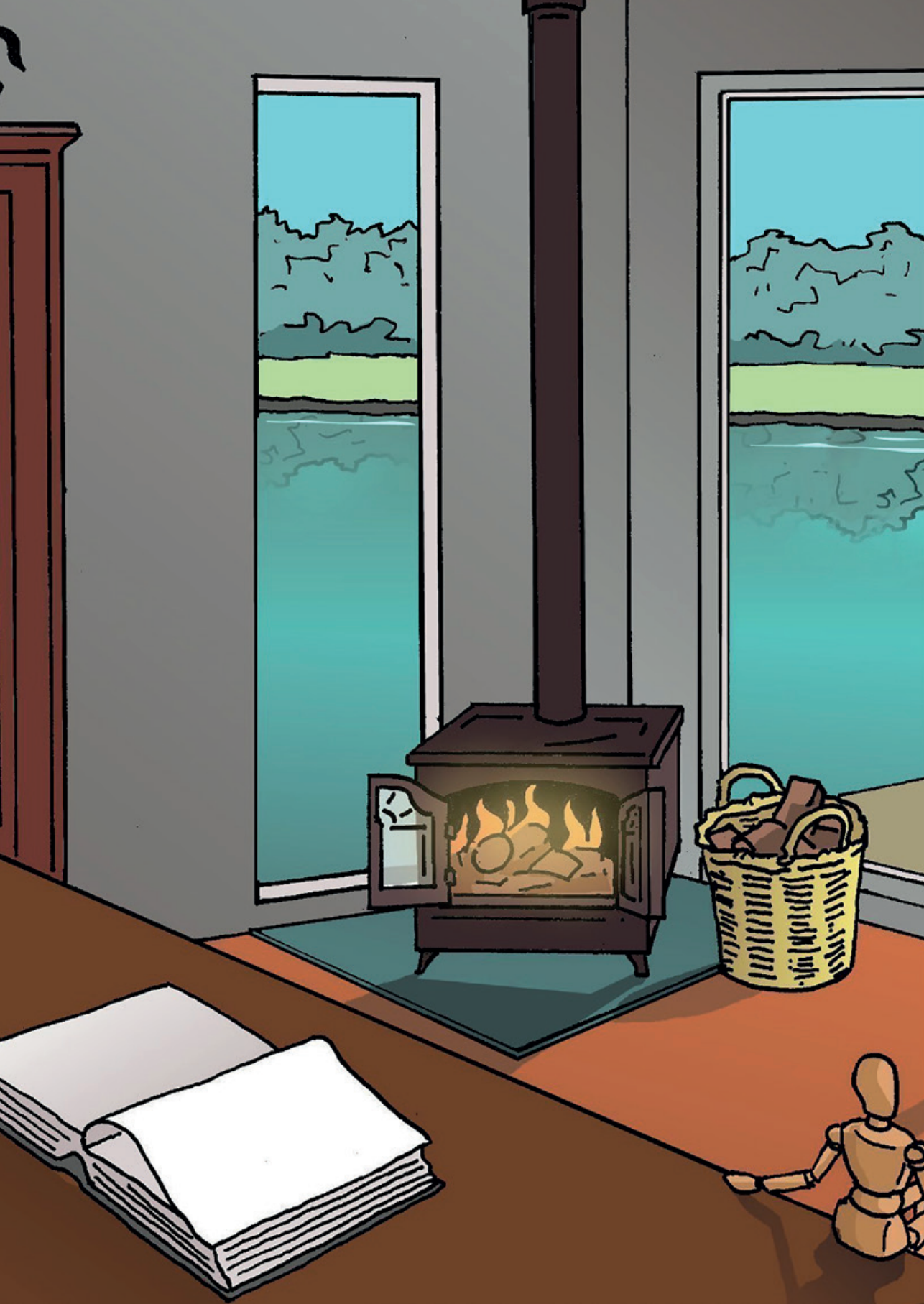
Subordinates' views on ineffective executive behavior of their managers (Brown, 1964)

An ineffective manager:

- Is not able to delegate, fails to recognize and make use of the full capabilities of others,
- Lacks confidence in others,
- Is not able to communicate well with others,
- Is indecisive,
- Is personally insecure and emotionally immature,
- Has an extreme self-interest,
- Uses status and others to get things done.

Do managers matter? (Google Project Oxygen, 2009)

Requirements for a manager:

- Be a good coach,
- Give the team sufficient space, avoid 'micromanagement',
- Let the team feel that their success and well-being is important,
- Be productive and results-oriented,
- Communicate clearly: listen to the team and share information,
- Help the employees with career development,
- Provide a clear vision and strategy for the team,
- Develop core technical skills to help advise the team.