

Quick Facts

Title: **Too Many Bosses, Too Few Leaders:**

The Three Essential Principles You Need to Become an Extraordinary Leader

Author: Rajeev Peshawaria

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Summary

This is a general management advice book about how to develop the self-awareness and internal fortitude necessary to lead any organization through periods of turbulent change. Mr. Peshawaria, a former executive at Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, provides practical frameworks, questionnaires, and other rubrics for managers to use when leading groups to accomplish great things. Recommended for any reader in a managerial position who is seeking career growth opportunities, or who is about to embark upon a journey of transformation in his or her professional life. This is Mr. Peshawaria's first major publication.

Discussion

Have you ever met somebody who you felt deserved to be elected to public office? Such individuals usually stand out from the crowd. They are clearly visionary. They possess the natural skills and the raw talent to lead any organization. Often, they are relentlessly driven to win victory and are confidently optimistic in the face of staunch opposition. These are people able to inspire others to always give their best effort, and whose integrity, stamina, and speaking abilities are truly exceptional. Perhaps, in the course of your own travels, you have encountered someone who fits this description. Maybe you even asked yourself, how did they get to be that way? In *Too Many Bosses, Too Few Leaders*, Rajeev Peshawaria does exactly that. Mr. Peshawaria attempts to identify patterns of behavior by using real-world examples of leaders, both in private sector businesses and government institutions. He distills excellence in leadership down to a few basic principles and key concepts. He writes about how to motivate oneself and others to achieve major strategic goals, particularly when undertaking challenging ventures.

According to Mr. Peshawaria, there is a common theme that recurs in the personal stories of successful leaders - they all have a clear sense of purpose and values that provides them with an ample reservoir of psychological strength to draw upon. The author expands on this notion of inner mental reserves when he writes:

“Leadership calls for challenging accepted norms. It is not a comfortable pursuit. Those who go into it with full knowledge of what is involved find the emotional and physical energy within them to face up to the challenges. That is leadership! No one can teach it to you-- you have to discover and define it for yourself. And the only way to discover what leadership means for you is to honestly keep looking for answers to these questions until you find them.”

All of us have an internal monologue that we use when making important decisions. Mr. Peshawaria counsels his readers to channel that monologue, to perform more rigorous self-assessment and introspection, thus providing structure to guide their decision making process so that it closely aligns

with their own core values. Mr. Peshawaria goes on to develop his argument about what makes an effective and successful leader in the modern workplace. He uses the acronym RED (Role, Environment, Development) when he discusses the necessity of enlisting the help of others in the effort to transform an organization into an outstanding business entity. Mr. Peshawaria also uses the term B-B-N, or Brains, Bones, and Nerves, when describing a framework for restructuring a company's internal processes around an executive strategy.

The words in this book struck a chord with me when I read them, because I myself have had a close encounter with excellent leadership during my own career. A few years ago, I had a boss who brought me into his office, about once a week on average, and we talked for about an hour. He was about six years older than me, in a position of some importance and authority. I admired and respected his wisdom and experience. Sometimes our conversations were very practical and focused on specific issues in running the day-to-day operations of the business. Other times, our talks would span a wide range of topics including politics, philosophy, science, history, and culture. He would always try to get me to think more strategically about the theoretical basis for all aspects of management. Over the course of two years we had many conversations, but eventually the bureaucracy of the organization caught up with him and curtailed his autonomy. It was not until after he had separated from the company, that I realized in hindsight that he was absolutely the best supervisor I had ever had in my career. He led by example, he was a neutral and fair arbiter, and he was partly responsible for my own decision to attend business school to earn an MBA.

Upon reflection, I believe that my relationship with my former supervisor is probably why Mr. Peshawaria's book is so compelling. Like my former boss, Mr. Peshawaria's ethnicity is Indian and he came to the United States for business purposes. I don't claim to know the man personally, but as I read his writing, I recognized certain hallmark traits that I would classify as uniquely Indian-American. Perhaps there is something special about the combination of East and West contained within the Indo-American experience that drives these individuals to become highly successful capitalists. Their entrepreneurial spirit and unwavering pursuit of success is truly admirable. I have sought to emulate the leadership characteristics of my predecessors, in my own career, and have tried to apply those same behaviors in the course of my own life.

Just how convincing is Rajeev Peshawaria's book? In the opinion of this reviewer, Mr. Peshawaria's reasoning is sound. His exposition is clear and the examples he uses to support his arguments are engaging. One of the best examples he uses in Chapters 1 and 5 is that of Kiran Bedi, an Indian police officer and government minister who spearheaded anti-corruption initiatives and led reform within the New Delhi prison system. Her inspiring story lends credence to Mr. Peshawaria's leadership narrative.

A core philosophical underpinning of human relations and business management is that of nature versus nurture. Are great business leaders born with certain innate genetic traits and characteristics that make them inherently more likely to achieve both personal and professional success? Or can leadership principles be taught to anybody? Unlike many general management books, this tome does not claim to prescribe a panacea for every business situation. Nor does it proclaim a cure-all for each and every possible ill that may befall a company. Rather, Peshawaria draws upon his experience as a business entrepreneur, as well as other anecdotal evidence that he gathered as a Human Resources consultant and

motivational speaker. Peshawaria's observations are deceptively simple but therein lies their strength. They are universal truths about human beings that have been true for millenia. Countless stories have been told extolling the virtues of human inspiration, proclivities, vices, moral principles, and strengths and weaknesses. Such works include: David and Goliath, The Odyssey, and Moby Dick. Peshawaria has simply recast and retold these stories in the context of business and management.

Chapter 10 contains some personal anecdotes from Mr. Peshawaria's time on Wall Street, and his dealings with Merriyl Lynch CEO while the firm was under considerable pressure from government regulators and external forces to sell the firm for pennies on the dollar. Although this section may indeed have been a important event, somehow it falls flat and fails to ring true. Perhaps this is due to the fact that many of the same financial executives mentioned here, who were involved in the financial crisis, have been portrayed elsewhere as being self-serving and unsympathetic to the plight of everyday workers grappling with high unemployment. However, this minor blemish does not significantly detract from the overall effectiveness of the book's message.

In the opinion of this reader, Rajeev Peshawaria's *Too Many Bosses, Too Few Leaders* offers original research, creative thinking, a fresh perspective, and an interesting discussion of the types of behaviors that are exhibited by real leaders in modern large and complex organizations. Mr. Peshawaria reduces leadership complexity to several key insights. He also aspires to elucidate, and indeed reaches, a deeper understanding of the human psyche. In doing so, Mr. Peshawaria expresses and categorizes some of the deepest human yearnings, including: ambition, pride, fear of the unknown, desire to feel appreciated, and a need to be understood. Tapping into the unlocked emotional potential energy of these feelings is one of his fundamental recommendations for leaders to excel.