

# KNOWLEDGECONNECT

Connecting you to social impact thinking worldwide



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## FROM THE EDITOR

The following selections revolve around the topic of leadership. Leadership is often equated with power. In practice, the true power of any leader is not determined by his or her position alone; it depends upon the economic, political and social forces over which he or she presides.

Leaders in the social impact sector often deal with complex and sticky social problems. Making headway on these problems is hard work. Three books highlighted below: *Leadership on the Line*, *Power and Love*, and *Studying Leadership*, tease out the perils and possibilities of leadership.

Fixed notions of leading are explored by *The Harvard Business Review* on leadership styles at work in India. We need not change time zones to find new paradigms for leaders, though. *The McKinsey Quarterly* reconsiders how leaders help their teams deal with changing circumstances and the *MIT Sloan Review* reexamines our expectations of star hires. Meanwhile, Derek Sivers puts the 'ship' back in leadership. He turns our focus from the leader to those who courageously follow, and makes us question where leadership truly arises.

With the rapid rise of social movements, we are witnessing the creation of nontraditional, nonhierarchical forms. These call for leaders who can engage and inspire rather than command and control. Jonathon Fisher reflects on leading a Sydney-based social movement through his review of Paul Hawken's *Blessed Unrest*. How do you lead a movement? What are the demands on leadership? And, what are the opportunities for followers?

Hopefully you will find something relevant in the summaries that follow. Links are provided so you can further investigate the pieces that interest you.

We welcome your posts and comments.

**Barbara J. Merz**

Editor, *Knowledge Connect*

## IN THIS EDITION

- 1. Leadership on the Line**  
Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky
- 2. Leadership Lessons from India**  
Harvard Business Review
- 3. Studying Leadership**  
Brad Jackson and Ken Parry
- 4. Power and Love**  
Adam Kahane
- 5. A CEO's Guide**  
McKinsey Quarterly
- 6. Star Hires**  
MIT Sloan Management Review
- 7. Next Gen Leaders**  
Stanford Social Innovation Review
- 8. Imagining the Future of Leadership**  
HBR blog series
- 9. How to Start a Movement**  
TED.com
- 10. Book Review: *Blessed Unrest***  
Reviewed by Jonathon Fisher

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## 1. LEADERSHIP ON THE LINE: STAYING ALIVE THROUGH THE DANGERS OF LEADING

by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky; Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

*Leadership on the Line* is oft-cited by tenured leaders as a favoured text, perhaps because the book offers a highly empathetic perspective. Heifetz and Linsky argue that leadership is a dangerous undertaking. They encourage those who want to "step forward, make a difference, take the heat, and survive to delight in the fruits of your labor." This book helps leaders face and mitigate common perils.

Leadership is a profoundly creative act. Where there is creation, there is change. Where there is change, there is loss. Where there is loss, there is resistance. People will resist leaders who attempt change.

Their first insight about change and leadership should come as no surprise to US President Barak Obama. Obama campaigned on a platform of change only to discover upon taking office that Americans were not as change-ready as they may have seemed during the election.

Most people want only painless change in the form of 'technical fixes' but there are a whole host of problems that do not yield to easy answers. These are sticky problems which require "adaptive change." Adaptive changes can challenge current behaviours, attitudes, and values. Predictably the Obama Administration has faced resistance to adaptive change policies in health, environmental and financial regulation.

*Leadership on the Line* argues that such resistance from constituents is part of the bargain of holding power.

According to Heifetz and Linsky:

"To lead is to live dangerously because when leadership counts, when you lead people through difficult change, you challenge what people hold dear – their daily habits, tools, loyalties, and ways of thinking – with nothing more to offer perhaps than a possibility."

Nevertheless, leadership is worth the risk because it improves lives. The authors offer some practical steps to survival amidst the dangers of leading. These include gaining perspective while maintaining your engagement; watching your allies as well as the opposition, forcing those who need to own the change to shoulder the burden of finding the answer; and replenishing yourself personally so that you can weather the inevitable storms and challenges.

The book draws attention to the personal costs of leadership and stresses that leaders need to protect themselves from internal and external pressures. The authors argue that leaders

who face continual threats can become cynical, arrogant, or callous. To maintain curiosity and compassion, leaders must maintain a connection to the people that inspired them to lead in the first place.

Navigating the professional and personal risks of leadership takes sustained commitment. For those who have already stepped into this risky realm or are contemplating the first step, this is a worthy read.

For more: [hbr.org/product/leadership-on-the-line-staying-alive-through-the-d/an/4371-HBK-ENG](http://hbr.org/product/leadership-on-the-line-staying-alive-through-the-d/an/4371-HBK-ENG)

## 2. HOW THE BEST INDIAN COMPANIES DRIVE PERFORMANCE BY INVESTING IN PEOPLE

by Peter Cappelli, Harbir Singh, Jitendra V. Singh, and Michael Useen. *The Harvard Business Review*, March 2010.

Practices associated with effective leadership vary across cultures. This piece from the *Harvard Business Review* highlights the ways leaders of highly-regarded Indian companies focus their energies. The findings are based on interviews of 105 leaders from 98 of the largest Indian-based companies, such as Tata, Reliance, Aventis, and Infosys. Unlike Western CEOs who often claim that cleverness at the top is a key determinant of success, Indian leaders point to the motivation of their people.

The authors also find that Indian business leaders emphasise the social mission of their work. They report that Indian business leaders regard Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a key part of social mission and employee motivation. Their research indicates that CSR is more meaningful in the Indian context than in the West. Achieving CSR targets is monitored regularly by 40% of Indian companies while only 17% of US companies report regularly paying attention to this goal.

Investing in people and mission may have pragmatic roots. CSR might be a means to grease the wheels with government in India. Investing in human capital may be a way to combat high levels of employee turnover facing big Indian corporations.

Over the past five years, Indian leaders began spending more time on internal issues. Consequently, Indian companies tend to invest heavily in employee training and responsibility. One successful Indian CEO when asked to define his legacy responded: "That I have destroyed the office of the CEO." He aims to invert the organisation so that the top is accountable to the bottom.

Even if you are not planning or hoping for anything so radical, this article usefully probes fixed notions of effective leadership.

To order the article see: [hbr.org/2010/03/leadership-lessons-from-india/ar/1](http://hbr.org/2010/03/leadership-lessons-from-india/ar/1)

## 3. A VERY SHORT, FAIRLY INTERESTING AND REASONABLY CHEAP BOOK ABOUT STUDYING LEADERSHIP

by Brad Jackson and Ken Parry, Sage Publications; 2008.

Hats off to Jackson and Parry for a book that exceeds the expectations set by its cover. This somewhat short, quite relevant, and loaned book came from a colleague who just finished his PhD in the field of leadership studies. Written by two professors of leadership studies – Jackson is a professor of leadership at Auckland Business School and Parry is a professor of leadership at Bond University in Australia – this book reviews leadership theories and trends.

The authors supplement their academic review with helpful anecdotes. They trace the roots of terms such as transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, visionary leadership, level five leaders, and sense-makers.

According to Jackson and Parry, leaders typically have to address three unmet needs in their followers:

1. Need for clarity: where are we going?
2. Need for meaning: what are we doing this for?
3. Need for safety: will we be OK if we do this?

To do this effectively, there is no one mode of leadership. The leadership style that will be most effective depends upon the followers.

Chapter three reexamines leadership from the perspective of followership. Virtually no one aspires to be a responsible follower even though that will be the reality for most people, most of the time. In fact, most leaders spend a good portion of their time following other people, systems, or advice. Followers construct leadership. Followers credential leaders. Followers moderate and modulate leadership. Yet followership is simply not sexy.

Belittling followership for leadership may be unwise. To date, there has been relatively lacklustre scrutiny about the effects of a top-heavy model. Could a wave of small, isolated efforts battling for resources like money and mind-space erode the efforts of the whole? What might this mean for the rapidly proliferating and sometimes duplicative leadership efforts in the social sector?

Perhaps the fragmented field might need to re-examine the possibility of aggregating efforts and reconsider followership.

To get your hands on a copy of this zesty read, see: [www.sagepub.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book229753](http://www.sagepub.com/booksProdDesc.nav?prodId=Book229753)

## 4. POWER AND LOVE: A THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

by Adam Kahane, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010.

Adam Kahane spoke about *Power and Love* to a Sydney Leadership audience at The Benevolent Society earlier this year. After two decades of work with seemingly intractable conflicts around the world, Kahane understands the challenge of wedding principles to practicalities.

He pins the failures of the Copenhagen climate change summit to bring together the greenies' love camp with the industrialists' power camp. Rhetorical pleas to save the planet for our grandchildren are not enough to overcome the powerful economic and political interests that exist today. The unmitigated failure in Copenhagen to induce both camps reveals his thesis: it takes both power and love to progress.

Through his experiences working on climate change, judicial reform, indigenous rights, and peacemaking, Kahane recounts instances where problems remain stuck. He argues that each of these demonstrate the imbalance of power and love. The challenge, of course, is to skillfully apply one or the other, or both, when needed. He cites Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who wrote: "Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic."

Kahane employs definitions from the philosopher Paul Tillich who defines power as: "the drive of everything living to realise itself, with increasing intensity and extensity;" and love as: "the drive towards the unity of the separated." In other words, love is the urge to honour connection and power is the resolve to achieve one's purpose.

Although full of opportunities for reflection, this book should not be mistaken for a how-to guide to lead social change. The book is weak on describing the options of how to rebalance. To shift from a love imbalance he writes: "...involves shifting from 'someone should' to 'I will'...stepping from love's connected feeling of warm belonging, to power's lonely feeling of putting on cold armor to do battle with the world, our colleagues, and ourselves."

It is philosophically appealing but pragmatically deficient when he writes: "Co-presencing processes are important in reconciling the power-love dilemma because they enable us to enact our drive for self-realisation in a context of felt unity, and to enact our drive to unite in a context of pragmatic self-realisation."

To be fair, Kahane argues that any one leader, organization, or sector cannot alone solve the social challenges we face. Our toughest challenges require collaboration. This book is a good companion for those who would like to reflect upon how to tap into both power and love within their leadership.

To order the book visit: [www.bkconnection.com/ProdDetails.asp?ID=9781605093048](http://www.bkconnection.com/ProdDetails.asp?ID=9781605093048)

## 5. A CEO'S GUIDE TO REENERGIZING THE SENIOR TEAM

by Derek Dean, *Strategy and Leadership in Turbulent Times, The McKinsey Quarterly, Number 1; 2010.*

CEOs wear many hats including Chief Inspiration Officer. Effective CEOs teach their top talent how to lead others. This article is written for CEOs coaching their senior team after the global financial crisis, but it is equally valid for leaders of social impact organisations who must help their teams adjust to new roles.

What happens when a top executive team's performance erodes? First, there is fear: CEOs must help others confront their fear. Dean writes:

"Spiking levels of fear can convert frank, flexible, open, and self-reflective leaders into defensive, close-minded, rigid, and literal ones. These leaders may take things personally, feel persecuted, cease productive self-reflection, and lose the ability to process new information and respond to difficult situations."

The natural instinct to close-down exacerbates fear: How do you reorient managers to a new environment? Dean argues that CEOs need to push the members of their senior team to reexamine the "truths" upon which they had built successful careers be they: "clear mandates and time horizons, experienced-based judgment, the ability to convert data into useful information for decision making, [or] a clear understanding of cultural norms."

CEOs must help their senior team confront the paralysis that comes with fear of failure and help overcome denial. This means helping their teams acknowledge their emotions so that they can reengage productively.

Where will senior managers look for an example? The CEO, of course. The CEO must model the type of behaviour she or he expects. Followers will zoom into the boss's moves for signs of change. The CEO must remain open, energised, respectful and confident.

If this all seems like a tall-order, remember that it's only one of the many hats of the job.

To register for the full article see: [www.mckinseyquarterly.com/A\\_CEOs\\_guide\\_to\\_reenergizing\\_the\\_senior\\_team\\_2444](http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/A_CEOs_guide_to_reenergizing_the_senior_team_2444)

## 6. WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE STAR HIRES PAY OFF

by Boris Groysberg, Linda-Eling Lee, and Robin Abrahams, *MIT Sloan Management Review, Winter 2010.*

The authors cite plenty of people and organisations across sectors that have fallen prey to the appealing 'Legend of the Lone Star'. It turns out no one individual can single-handedly turn around an organisation. How disappointing.

Rather than let stars peter-out, companies can enhance their lustre through considering them part of a constellation. Surrounding star employees with high quality colleagues is one way to get the most out of their talents. By surrounding talented individuals with other stars, an organisation can achieve "a halo effect." You get more out of top tier performers when you build them up as part of a high calibre team.

Many companies fail to reap the full benefits of their stars because they do not consider the whole system when making decisions such as compensation. This article suggests that high-flying stars are often overpaid, a mistake whose consequences may ostracise the individual as well as demoralise existing employees by implicitly devaluing their efforts.

Of course money matters to star performers, but leaders need to think about compensation in the context of the whole organisation. For leaders who wish to build a winning team, this article recommends not pinning hope on one tantalising hire.

To access the article, see: [sloanreview.mit.edu/the-magazine/articles/2010/winter](http://sloanreview.mit.edu/the-magazine/articles/2010/winter)

## 7. THE NORMATIVE PROBLEM WITH THE TERM 'NEXT GENERATION' LEADERS

by Rosetta Thurman, Stanford Social Innovation Review; January 25, 2010.

This piece suggests that the normative problem with the term 'Next Generation Leaders' – as applied to young leaders in the nonprofit sector – is that it limits these individuals' impact today.

The author posits that by waiting until these young leaders have sufficient characteristics to make them "now" leaders, they will have to wait until the Baby Boomers have left their posts. But Baby Boomers are not retiring anytime soon. In fact, many successful Boomers are taking on 'encore careers' in the nonprofit sector.

Self described as a Gen-Y career coach and a nonprofit evangelist, Ms. Thurman's post has provoked discussion among emerging leaders. There was genuine debate about whether these leaders actively eschew this mantle or get about the business of making 'Next Generation' inherently more appealing and attractive.

To follow this discussion and find related blogs see: [www.rossettathurman.com/2010/03/the-normative-problem-with-the-term-next-generation-leaders/](http://www.rossettathurman.com/2010/03/the-normative-problem-with-the-term-next-generation-leaders/)

## 8. IMAGINING THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

Harvard Business Review Blog Series, [blogs.hbr.org/imagining-the-future-of-leadership/](http://blogs.hbr.org/imagining-the-future-of-leadership/), April- May 2010.

This six-week blog series arose when Harvard professors were asked how leadership might look in the future.

Indra Nooyi, chairman and CEO of PepsiCo, was Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter's answer to the question: Who do you imagine as the future face of leadership? She pictures Indra Nooyi because she is: "cross-cultural, female, visionary, and values driven." Under Nooyi, PepsiCo has created innovative public recycling kiosks and funded social innovation non-profits. She has led PepsiCo to examine and improve the health implications of its products as they move into emerging markets.

According to Kanter, Nooyi is: "adding societal values to financial values to create a meaningful human institution out of a bundle of impersonal assets." Kanter provides other examples of her broader point – future leaders will want to bring their values to work and make a positive difference in their workplace and the world.

The comments to the posts are particularly worth reading. One commentator brings our attention back to the contributions we make as customers to the leaders we get: "It is adaptation to consumer wants and demands that makes a great leader." So it is that as we imagine the future of leadership we should also imagine who we will be in the future. What values will we hold as a society that leaders of tomorrow will embody?

Other recommended posts include: Leadership – It's (Much) More than Position, A Call for Mindful Leadership, Leading from Behind, Leadership in the Age of Climate Change, and Does Leadership Change in a Web 2.0 World.

Various fields of academic research shed light on how leaders might be called upon in the future. There is plenty to challenge you with over twenty provocative blog posts to browse.

To take part in the discussion, see: [blogs.hbr.org/imagining-the-future-of-leadership/](http://blogs.hbr.org/imagining-the-future-of-leadership/)

## 9. HOW TO START A MOVEMENT

by Derek Sivers, TED.com, filmed February 2010 and posted April 2010.

How do you spark a movement for social change and what is required? It may not be what you suspect. The talk, "How to Start a Movement," by Derek Sivers is really about courageous followership. In his words: "The first follower is what turns a lone nut into a leader."

Based on a video of concert goers, he draws out lessons about how movements gain momentum. First, a movement must be public so that people can be enticed to step forward from the crowd of bystanders. Second, it is important to show not just the leader but also the followers, because new followers emulate the other followers, not just the leader. Third, if you are a leader, remember to nurture your first followers as equals so as to give the movement priority rather than yourself. He argues that if you really care about starting a movement, have the courage to follow.

Interestingly, TED talks have themselves become a movement. TED is a small nonprofit that started out in 1984 as a conference bringing together people from Technology, Entertainment, and Design. Now TED.com offers a free web-based film library of pithy lectures, or TED Talks, by experts across a broad range of fields. It's all about 'Ideas Worth Spreading'.

Check out their video library for other intriguing lone nuts.

To watch this talk: [www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/derek\\_sivers\\_how\\_to\\_start\\_a\\_movement.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/derek_sivers_how_to_start_a_movement.html)

## 10. BOOK REVIEW: *BLESSED UNREST* BY PAUL HAWKEN reviewed by Jonathon Fisher:

“Only connect,” wrote the British author E.M. Forster. This is the message I take from Paul Hawken’s *Blessed Unrest*, a book which has important lessons for those of us catalysing social change movements.

*Blessed Unrest* suggests that although there are vast numbers of people and organisations who share the desire for a transition to a saner and wiser culture, most of them are not connected with each other. We live in a time where many people feel profound isolation. It leaves me with the question: “What could be possible if we became really aware of the size of this movement and then found ways to connect and support the emergence of a new narrative in ways that are enjoyable, entertaining, and innovative?”

I believe the role of genuine leadership is to provide the spaces for people to connect and have permission to freely share new narratives around the notions of ‘success’, ‘luxury’, and ‘fulfillment’. People are yearning to connect in new, entertaining, and optimistic ways. They are not interested in angry protests, demonising people or becoming burned out using ineffective means. They want a new kind of activism – one that is filled with beauty, artistry, inspiration, science, and utilises modern technologies.

While *Blessed Unrest* makes a powerful case that the current sustainability and social justice movement is the largest movement in the history of human society, over 100 pages of the book is dedicated to listing over 1 million types of non-profit groups involved in this movement. Why would someone devote over 100 pages of a book to listing organisations? Could it be a demonstration of widespread fragmentation? Could it be that one of the big missing pieces for the creation of a wiser and saner culture is connecting like minded people who might be feeling alone or isolated?

I continually encounter people from all walks of life who support a whole new worldview and yet feel that they are the only ones in their circle who view the world the way they do. This was one of my key motivations for establishing *Wake Up Sydney*. I personally wanted a place to connect with other like-minded Sydneysiders who seek change in a whole new way. I also wanted to provide a place for the disparate groups and organisations to come together. For too long the worlds of social change, sustainability, yoga, the arts, and science have lived in separate worlds.

One year down the track, thousands of Sydneysiders have joined this movement and come together to be inspired and to connect with other people who feel the same way they do. What brings these people together is a common set of values and concerns around their personal, community and societal wellbeing. They defy typical demographic stereotypes, but are more of a psychographic of people who want to be part of a new kind of renaissance.

The disconnection people are experiencing is supported with the research of sociologist Paul Ray who found that a quarter of

people identify sustainability and social justice as major elements forming their worldview and lifestyle. Despite the strength in numbers, the research also points to a pervasive feeling of isolation. These people rarely express their opinions outside of their closely knit groups. This is why *Blessed Unrest* refers to this movement as under the media’s radar.

History shows that it only takes a handful of creative and concerned individuals gathering to trigger positive large scale change. Whether it was the French Revolution, the Renaissance or Earth Hour – they all unfolded from small groups of people connecting to share new ideas and narratives. *Blessed Unrest* clearly illustrates this with its story of a dozen people meeting in a small print shop in London to discuss the abolition of the slave trade. “They were reviled and dismissed by businessmen and politicians. It was argued that their crackpot ideas would bring down the English economy, eliminate growth and jobs, cost too much money, and lower the standard of living.” However, this was the beginning of a movement that would change the world forever.

So what is the role of leadership in fostering the emergence of a new narrative built around kindness for each other and the natural environment? I hesitate to put forth a definitive answer; however it may not be as difficult as it initially appears. The visionary leaders are the ones who have the courage to invite new, courageous conversations within their families, organisations, or network of friends. We do not need to change the entire world or country. Just one family, community or organisation could re-imagine itself and this small group would inspire others to start down this road. Feelings of disempowerment and cynicism would disappear.

The key is to keep enjoyment, curiosity and fun at the forefront of whatever we do. Like Emma Goldman, a well-known political activist, once said: “If there won’t be any dancing at the revolution, I’m not coming!” So instead of serious meetings under florescent lights, what if you had a picnic with nice wine, invited a local musician or simply organised online for a dialogue about positive changes and connection in your community.

Here’s the thing: we could rapidly change direction. The only thing that constrains us is our creativity and courage to start a risky conversation with a friend, family member or senior manager. This conversation would be one of thousands of new conversations. We would begin a new narrative centered around kindness towards ourselves, each other, and the natural world. My dream is for Sydney to become the global hub for this new narrative.

*Jonathon Fisher is the founder of Wake Up Sydney! for more check out [www.wakeupsydney.com.au](http://www.wakeupsydney.com.au)*

**To order the book and read it for yourself, see: [www.blessedunrest.com](http://www.blessedunrest.com)**