

GOOD BOSS, BETTER BOSS

PRACTICAL LEADERSHIP MODELS
FOR **POST-COVID** SUCCESS



STEVEN F. COYLE

Supervisors, Leaders, Managers, CEOs. Have you ever wondered....?

- How to motivate and lead your teams to higher results?
- What practical, easy models to use with your people?
- How to raise your department's exposure to reflect the importance of what you do?
- How to increase your organizational value to move upward and onward?
- How to communicate, lead, and motivate your team post-COVID?
- How to attract and retain top performers to win the talent war?

This book answers these questions and more. It's full of creative, PRACTICAL ideas and models to ensure you lead well. The author shares tips learned in the West and East to lead successful multi-ethnic teams during stormy, post-COVID seas.

If you're:

- a supervisor
- a manager
- a CEO (or 'C' anything)
- a military officer
- a government director
- a professional
- a business owner
- a politician
- or anyone who leads others or will lead others one day

The book's practical and easy models will help you become a better leader and achieve better results.

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Practical Leadership Models for
Post-COVID Success

Steven F. Coyle

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Note: While I draw from many first-hand experiences, the names of colleagues, clients, supervisees, and mentees have changed to protect their privacy.

In this book, the words “leader” and “supervisor” are used interchangeably. If you see either of these two words, the other is implied.

*To COVID-19,
Without you this book would
never have been written.*

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PREFACE

As a supervisor, I often needed quick, practical ideas from others in the field of supervision. Sometimes I turned to books, but most were written by academics and consultants who did little if any supervising or leading teams. This practical book is geared for people who lead and supervise others on a daily basis. I share many easy-to-remember, time-saving models that you can use while putting out your day-to-day supervisory fires.

This book focuses on the most difficult parts of your job: communicating and managing people. It also covers how to succeed in your organization by moving yourself upwards and onwards. You will gain new techniques on successfully dealing with your peers, boss, senior management, suppliers, customers, and even competitors to increase your organizational value.

I have led large and small teams and together we have experienced success and sometimes failure. I will share my experiences to make you a better supervisor and leader. I'm lucky to have worked with some great teams and bosses. I've also worked with a few horrible bosses, but the horrible ones have taught me what not to do. I do believe that all of us can become **better** bosses.

If you have any comments, techniques, or questions about the art of leading people, please feel free to contact me.

Terima kasih,

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INTRODUCTION

You're reading this book because either you want to be a better leader or supervisor — or you're buying it for someone who is or will be a leader or supervisor. Most books on leadership and supervisory skills are too theoretical for me. They are written by 'experts' who make more money as experts than as leaders and supervisors.

In this book I've shared many examples, techniques, and models that led to most of my staff calling me a good boss. Of course, a few supervisees have called me a bad boss (or worse). Supervisors can't please everyone, but if your poor performers—who remained poor after your intervention—still call you a bad boss, that's great. They're bad employees.

But, if your top performers call you a bad boss, then you are bad. Your situation is dire. You **MUST** immediately change your style, techniques, and attitude or you will be fired. Your top performers, to your organization, are more valuable than you because they deliver the results.

My work experience is in the banking, telecommunication, and education fields in the U.S., Poland, and Malaysia. Since 2003 I have led a Malaysian-based consultancy team that takes on assignments around the world. I have lived, worked, and travelled to 40 countries. Along the way, I have worked with some great organizations and teams comprised of diverse ethnicities.

The techniques in this book apply from the lowest front-line supervisors to 'C' level senior employees. We all supervise no matter our job title. I'm a corporate trainer and many

of my models use mnemonics to make them easier to remember.

Let me be upfront: I am apprehensive when I hear the word ‘leader.’ When that word hits my ears, I immediately think of either senior management or senior politicians. In most cases they have disappointed me. When I hear the word ‘coach,’ my feelings are more positive as coaches — in my life — have cared more for me than leaders. When I hear the word ‘supervisor,’ I get a taste in my mouth akin to vegetables. Critically important to our well-being, but sometimes not so tasty.

Perhaps because I live in Asia, I prefer the word, “boss”, and I use it a lot in this book.

My Senior Management Story

When I was a low-level employee at a U.S. wireless telecom operator, my employer was bought out by a larger competitor. My colleagues and I were all nervous about the new ownership change. My employer bused all its employees to a cinema to explain how the merger would affect our jobs. Our CEO had Hollywood looks and was dressed in cool high-tech style: unbuttoned suit jacket, no tie, loafers, and perfect, jet-black hair.

At the end of his presentation, he opened the floor to questions.

One of us asked, “Jim, will you be coming with us into the new venture?”

He replied, “Yes.” The whole cinema erupted with applause. We gave him a standing ovation.

Two weeks later he resigned to launch his start-up company. He must have been planning this for months, maybe even years.

When I see people standing to applaud leaders, I think of all the bad things that can happen (from a historical standpoint). I’m not keen about people calling themselves ‘leaders’, as really, they are just humans with their own strengths and

weaknesses. In any organization, leaders are merely employees at a higher salary grade and position than others. As humans, their #1 goal isn't the company, or you, but their own lives and families. You can't blame them. You would have done the same.

Still, we humans like to put other humans on pedestals. So why not take advantage of leadership opportunities? You can earn more money and recognition. You can gain new skills and contacts. You will become more valuable.

Each leader is a supervisor. Each supervisor is a leader. The only difference is in salary, power, and influence. The jobs are the same — just on different scales. Of course, some bosses are better than others.

Yet although supervisors and leaders are essentially the same, the word 'leadership' has become a buzzword in today's management thinking. I've spent a large portion of my working life in the corporate training world. I know that the trainers who make the most money specialize in 'leadership training.'

Whatever that is?

My Leadership Training Story

My training partner and friend, Jude Louis, invited me to a networking event hosted by the Australian embassy here in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The venue was at a nice lodge in a jungle outside of KL. It was a trainers-meet-trainers event. A delegation of Australian-based trainers was brought to meet and network with Malaysian trainers.

Although the embassy had the best of intentions, I immediately knew that this would be a waste of time. Trainers are lone wolves. They don't work well together. It should have been an event where Australian trainers met Malaysian corporate training managers. Corporate training managers aren't lone wolves. They are employees who have access to a com-

pany's training budget. They have the power to hire trainers. Anyway, since Jude is a good friend, I went.

The venue and the food were wonderful. Since it was an Australian event, there was plenty of booze. When their training delegation arrived, it was as if a convention of Barbie and Ken dolls had arrived. They were gorgeous. Their teeth so white. Their hair so perfect. Their clothes so dashing. The men reminded me of televangelists. No one seemed to be over 45. Whereas I was 55, overweight, and nearly bald.

There were ten of them and as I met each one, I asked, "So what kind of training do you do?" Each answered, "Leadership." But their responses varied when I asked, "What kind of leadership training do you do?"

Some said teambuilding skills, others leadership values, others grooming skills, others presentation skills, others gave nebulous responses as if they were trying to describe heaven, "To build a non-threatening culture of empowerment and inspiration to meet organizational targets." But I wondered, aren't good supervisors supposed to do all these?

When they asked me what kind of training I did? I said, "Supervisory skills." Maybe it was my insecurity in facing such beautiful people, but I could have sworn they responded with the word, "Oh." Then looked at me as if they felt sorry for me, like, 'Oh, I remember when I was in this guy's shoes, poor fella.' Although the event was fun (what event isn't fun with free food and drinks?), it was non-productive. It resulted in no new business or novel insights about 'leadership.'

To keep this book small, I'm focusing on the more artistic—and more difficult—aspects of supervising others. I share models, tips, ideas, and experiences. The book's goal is to help you become a better leader, supervisor, commander, manager, CEO, or whatever job title you have. How will you become a better boss? You will do that by strengthening your communication skills, getting the right people on your team, coaching correctly, and—most importantly—building the right work

environment to deliver the results. Today, COVID-19 has given us an added challenge. Although some parts of a supervisor's job are timeless, the pandemic has clearly disrupted many aspects.

Let me briefly explain the book's nine chapters:

Chapter 1: What Exactly is Good Leadership?

My idea of good leadership is probably different from yours. In this chapter, I explain the two qualities that good leaders must possess. You either have them by now or you don't.

For the purposes of the book, I assume you possess these two qualities.

Chapter 2: Who Are You? Who Are They?

We start by understanding ourselves and other people's four main types of personalities to connect with others (and ourselves). By understanding others' personalities, we will have an easier time connecting and influencing them to achieve the desired results.

Chapter 3: Building the Right Systems and Processes

Like in nature, how people live and work is dependent on their environment. It's important to implement the right systems and processes in order to create a performance-based, creative, pleasant work environment that reflects yours, theirs, and your organization's values. If you create the wrong work environment, you will fail.

Chapter 4: Communication

Humans are social, communicative beings. Your success as a supervisor depends on how you communicate with others at all levels. E.g., your subordinates, peers, superiors, investors, Board, and customers. Working hard isn't enough. Being smart isn't enough. Your communication skills will help you lead your team to achieve the result. Good communication skills also get you hired and promoted.

Chapter 5: Managing People

Supervising is one of our most difficult tasks as most people don't like to be told what to do. We will cover how to get maximum results out of your people while building a motivational work environment, especially post-COVID.

Chapter 6: Coaching

People are sensitive when receiving feedback and this chapter focuses on how to give feedback to continue 'good' behaviors and change 'bad' behaviors. I will share my 5-Step 'House Model'. A supervisor who gives feedback incorrectly kills team synergy and motivation. It's critical that you master this skill well to avoid harming your people.

Chapter 7: Handling Problems

A large portion of our day is spent putting out fires, handling complaints, and problem-solving. It's easy leading people when the 'seas are calm.' But supervising during stormy weather shows you and your people whether you are a true leader or not.

Chapter 8: Preparing For Your Next Act

We focus on helping you move upwards and onwards in your career.

Chapter 9: 7 Common Supervisory Questions with Answers

Quick responses to questions and problems many supervisors have.

I hope you find my book useful. I wish you all the best in your quest to improve yourself, become a better boss, and enjoy the rewards.

We can always become better at what we do, especially in this new post-COVID world.

CHAPTER 1:

WHAT EXACTLY IS LEADERSHIP?

“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.”

– John C. Maxwell, American leadership expert, author, and speaker

Everybody wants to be a leader nowadays. And why not? Leaders get more recognition and pay. Leadership trainers get paid a lot of money. People who run leadership conventions can become millionaires. Humans crave leaders, but we don’t like bosses.

How do you define a leader?

Some academics and training institutes have delineated multiple leadership competencies in an attempt to reduce leadership to a science. They promise that mastery of these 47 competencies will make you a bona fide leader. Some universities even offer PhD degrees in leadership. Doesn’t this make you wonder if most of the world’s leaders ever received a leadership degree?

To me, there are only two qualities that make you a good leader. And you either have them by now or you don’t. These two qualities must be developed at an early stage in your life. And only you will know whether you possess them. In fact, you don’t even need to supervise or lead others (except yourself) to cultivate these qualities.

I DON'T believe that you can drill leadership skills into adults. If you can't lead as a young adult, even if it's just yourself, then how can a mere workshop or course make up *all* the difference? Greta Thunberg, the Swedish climate change activist, started her worldwide campaign at age 16. She exemplifies how youth is not incompatible with good leadership. Whereas certain old world leaders, to me, aren't good leaders.

Leadership isn't about skills (that's in the domain of supervision); leadership is about the inherent beliefs and strengths that you developed long before you started working. These qualities aren't simply acquired through a class, a few books, or a convention. You can't be trained to be a leader, but you can be trained to be a better leader.

Most 'leadership training' is a con job, akin to looking for water with a divining stick. It's hocus-pocus, kumbaya, feel good stuff that puffs up your ego and fades soon after the 'training' ends. An easy way to discern this is by asking 'leadership training' participants two questions:

1) "How was it?"

They usually respond with "great"; "fun"; "the best training in my life."

2) "What did you learn?"

There is an uncomfortable silence. The higher the price the organization paid for the leadership training, the more uncomfortable the silence.

Let's face it: leadership is getting others to support or follow you to achieve the desired results. To get people to follow you, you use a mixture of influencing and negotiation techniques alongside a combination of carrots and sticks. Since I want to be a 'good' leader, my repertoire places less emphasis on fear, intimidation, and punishment — while favoring rewards, encouragement, and positive reinforcement. Fear works, but only to a certain level. To outcompete other teams and companies, you need more than fear. Respect works wonders.

I nevertheless support the use of a little fear. Fear doesn't need to have a horribly negative connotation. A little fear is good. You just need to channel it towards positive outcomes. A total lack of fear breeds complacency.

There are two essential characteristics of a good leader. If you lack one, you'll never successfully lead others over a long period of time. No amount of classroom time, leadership conventions, scholarly research, or 'character-building' activities will endow you with these two qualities.

They are:

1. Courage (this is most important)
2. Ethics

Any other important leadership characteristics are not characteristics but competencies — anyone can learn them.

This is the bottom line: If you need someone to tell you or teach you how to be a leader, then you're not one. Most leadership training isn't about leadership training; it's about supervisory training, self-development, or rah-rah teambuilding. The question isn't: Are you a leader? You already know the answer. The question is: Should you lead others?

To my young readers: Don't worry if you haven't had a chance to lead others yet. If you're courageous and ethical, your time will come. The cream rises to the top. In the meantime, take on more responsibilities to increase your successes or failures, both will increase your self-confidence and courage.

1. Courage

Do you believe in yourself? Do you take reasonable risks? Do you accept the blame for your decisions (and those made by your people) when things go wrong? Do you address problems immediately? Do you address the problems caused by senior management to prevent them from adversely affecting

your people and your department? Do you tell the truth? Are you courageous enough to be open-minded and **change your decision if another person's insight is better**? Do you highlight organizational injustices? Do you stand up for your team to customers, peers, and senior management?

Courage is the most critical prerequisite for good leadership. You can be a leader without ethics, but you can't be an ethical leader without courage. Is it even ethical to lack the courage you need to confront injustice? If you lack courage, eventually, others will see you crumble.

During a particular Southeast Asian work project, the Head of HR asked me to write a non-discrimination policy for their organization. The policy would be discussed at their next HR leadership meeting. At the meeting, the leader saw that my policy included gender as a non-discrimination factor. He asked me to take it out. I argued the non-discrimination policies of most modern companies include gender. He still insisted. I looked around the conference table for support from my fellow HR leaders, but none of them made eye contact. Since half the attendees were women, this was especially disheartening. Despite their high salaries and relatively prestigious job titles, they weren't leaders.

By 'courage' I don't mean stupid or false courage. This type of courage causes rash decisions that often backfire. A leader who makes too many rash decisions with stupid or false courage will eventually be replaced.

I've found leaders with courage but no ethics. Peter Drucker, the father of management thinking and a witness to Hitler's rise to power, calls such individuals 'mis-leaders'¹. Most dictators leave a legacy that is heavy in blood but light on collective progress. Sure, they had courage and often unpar-

1 Rich Karlgaard, "Peter Drucker on Leadership," Forbes, November 19, 2004, https://www.forbes.com/2004/11/19/cz_rk_1119drucker.html#52fc2c096f48 (Accessed 6 January 2021). Drucker warns about the dangers of charismatic leadership in the interview.

alleled charisma, but they used any means available to maintain their power and pursue their objectives.

On the other hand, leaders with ethics but no courage are cowards. History forgets many of them as their impact is often minimal. If you lead without courage, your performance will reflect your fearful disposition to your team, peers, boss, senior management, board of directors, and customers. You are unwittingly getting yourself fired.

Since leaders are paid more, they need to demonstrate their added value by displaying courage. Unfortunately, I've found many leaders to be so desperate to cover their ass that they become gutless.

When I was working for an American finance company, I was forced to sit in on my boss' call with our home office in New York. New York was calling because my colleague, Roger, a good performer, forgot to file a legal document. This honest mistake could potentially cause a million-dollar loss if the customer defaulted on its loan. Roger and I listened to our boss mention Roger's name and emphasize how sorry Roger was for the mistake. Although I personally liked my boss and considered him an ethical leader, he was a coward. I wanted to rip the phone from his hands and have Roger explain the situation himself since our boss wasn't defending him.

2. Ethics

Are you a good person? Will you lie, cheat, and steal to achieve your target? Do you put yourself or your position ahead of the good of your people or organization? Will you burn down bridges, villages, and people to get what you want (the ends justify the means)? Do people trust you? Do you set a good example? Are you fair? Are you on the take? Are you prejudiced-based or performance-based when evaluating your team members?

Pawel Miller, a CEO based in Poland, had to help a formerly communist or socialist state-run company transition to a pri-

vate, capitalist structure. He said that the hardest part of the transition was tackling peoples' entrenched mindsets.

To lead this change, he firmly believes in the importance of authenticity:

I couldn't promise them much except sweat and blood. The journey was going to be tough. I ended up laying off 65% of the workforce, but I told the survivors that the distant future will be bright. And it was. We were able to stem the losses after four years; whereas the new owners expected it to take five years to turn it around. In fact, some of the retrenched staff even contacted me to say 'thank you' for retrenching them. They said, although painful at the time, the retrenchment helped them learn new skills and better prepare for work in a capitalistic environment.

Humans are imperfect creatures. Our courage and ethics are on a continuum. The best, most inspirational, and wisest leaders are at the higher ends of the spectrum. The SOB's, dictators, despots, psychopaths, cowards and criminals ('mis-leaders') are at the lower ends.



Our lives are governed by ethical principles. In today's IT age these principles could be called our 'operating system' (O/S). Is your O/S an ethical one? Whether it is or isn't WILL affect the type of leader you are. If you are an unethical, back-stabbing subordinate; you will become an unethical, back-stabbing leader. You can't simply change your character. It has taken you years to develop, test, and perfect your O/S.

Humans, like apes, respect dominance and confidence. Strongmen appeal to us. Many of them rise up in the corporate world, but that doesn't mean they are good leaders. They lead with fear and charisma, not ethics.

Only you will know if you are courageous and ethical. If you are, you can become a great supervisor. If you aren't, you can still be a leader and supervisor—but I feel sorry for your subordinates. We extol leaders who demonstrate both qualities because they left the world a better place. This includes individuals like Nelson Mandela, George Washington, Angela Merkel, Bill Gates, and hopefully, you.

If your courage levels are low, you can do something about it. You can push yourself into challenging experiences that test yourself. I find the more challenging situations the better. Overcoming challenging circumstances- and sometimes even failing in them—leads to increased courage as most people avoid challenges. Create a support system of people who share your ethics that you can rely on when taking courageous decisions. These people can be family, friends, mentors, key team members, senior bosses, board members—even God.

Your job gives you power, influence, and the ability to change people's lives. How well you use it determines how well your people remember you. Your courage and ethics will determine if you become a memorable boss. Headhunters advise their job-seeking clients to pay the most attention to who their future supervisor will be if they take up a new position in a different company. If he or she is a good boss, the new job can be wonderful because good bosses develop you into something you never knew you could become.

I see this in the careers of top athletes. Some will give up more lucrative offers because they want to play for a certain coach. The coach has a winning track record and is known for developing his or her players. Who doesn't want to win? Who doesn't want to be developed into the best that s/he can be? Great coaches are a key factor in attracting great talent. This factor isn't limited to the world of professional sports.

Good bosses help people win and exceed their limitations. Bad bosses, well...

For the sake of simplicity, I will minimize using the word 'leader' throughout the rest of this book— 'supervisor' or 'boss' will be privileged instead. For me, the word 'leader' is loaded with too many misconceptions and falsehoods. Too many management theorists put leaders on pedestals while belittling those who manage or supervise. In reality, leaders manage and supervise — while managers and supervisors also lead.

My Chapter's Key Points:

- Leadership comes down to two characteristics: 1) courage; 2) ethics. You either have them by now or you don't. Of the two, courage is the more important one.

Provided you have the characteristics of a leader, the next chapter focuses on connecting with the different types of people you will lead.