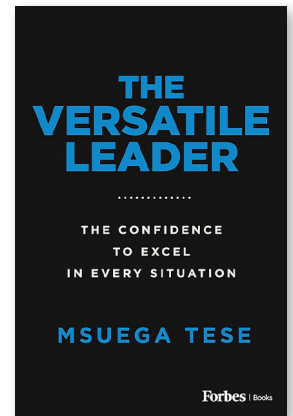


The Versatile Leader

The Confidence to Excel in Every Situation

by **Msuega Tese**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Who is a versatile leader? What sets them apart from the rest of the world? How do great leaders create valued outcomes and lead their organizations toward unparalleled success?

The book, *The Versatile Leader: The Confidence to Excel in Every Situation* deploys familiar occupations as metaphors to drive home important aspects of strategy and tactics. With its roots embedded into three critical areas of leadership, the book highlights values that serve as a guiding light for those wanting to become great leaders.

By including powerful references to Bible verses, stories, and principles, author Msuega Tese urges leaders to analyze where they have gone wrong and identify important lessons they learn.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- About the qualities of a versatile leader.
- How to lay the foundation for versatile leadership.
- About familiar occupations as metaphors.
- How to deploy strategy and tactics to excel in every situation.

Introduction

Leadership skills are needed everywhere. Unfortunately, only certain people in need do have them. However, it is possible to overcome this shortcoming and become a versatile leader if desired.

A versatile leader is a person of integrity who, along with others, creates valued outcomes using appropriate metaphors. The principles you're about to learn in the book are very portable and can be used anywhere without the need for retooling.

Part I examines the definition of leadership and covers fundamental concepts including situational leadership, metaphors, and the organizational life cycle (or the S-Curve). Parts II and III present an occupation used as a metaphor. The metaphors in part II account for less frequent actions called strategy. They set the stage for tactics, which emerge as metaphors in part III.

Part 1: Foundation

Chapter 1: Foundation

Leadership involves three words: beliefs, actions, and benefits.

Beliefs have profound implications for individuals and organizations. To survive and achieve success, organizations must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all their policies and actions.

Without actions, beliefs are of no value. Regardless of the situation in which a leader finds herself, she must act according to what she believes to be true. While it is not wrong to think of the personal gain one can derive from a situation, a leader should always focus on what will be helpful to others. Ultimately, authentic leadership is all about consistently acting on your beliefs for the benefit of others.

Chapter 2: Concepts

The key concepts linked to leadership include Followers, Influence, Authority, Position, and Management.

Since leaders act on their beliefs for the benefit of others, some "others" may end up following the leader. However, not everyone will follow, and you shouldn't expect them to do so either. The widespread perception that a leader must have followers is flawed. Indeed, there are leaders with followers, but we cannot generalize and say it must always be that way.

Influence is a phenomenon many people use to define leadership. But leadership itself is not defined solely as an influence. If we wake up in the morning intending to influence someone, we'll most likely return home disappointed. We can do all the right things, but the decision to change is not in our hands but theirs. This is why trying to control influence is futile.

Authority is the right to use power. We must know how to use the authority we already have to do good repeatedly, irrespective of our position in an organization. It is possible to lead from any position and act on your beliefs to achieve remarkable outcomes. Being a leader is a matter of choice, not position. Leadership is about how we deal with people. Management is about how we deal with things. To lead effectively, a leader must use both hands – the "leader hand" and the "manager hand."

Chapter 3: S-Curve

Effective leadership requires understanding where your organization is on the S-Curve or the business life cycle. The stages in this curve include preparation, start-up, growth, maturity, and decline.

The preparation stage is critical but often omitted when describing the business life cycle. This stage is where the importance of writing a business plan comes in. Crafting a comprehensive plan helps challenge many assumptions, expose faulty concepts, and bring a great dream to life.

After you register the venture at the preparation stage, you progress into the start-up stage. Use the MVP (minimum viable product) concept to test and validate your assumptions. It is often difficult to guess how long a company's start-up stage would last. To depart from this stage, a venture must overcome the valley of death, make regular profits, and demonstrate the potential for reliable growth.

The growth stage brings a time of regular profits and more growth opportunities. This is when leaders must set standards, put systems in place, and constantly improve the changing requirements.

The maturity stage is when your brand is known and profits are predictable, and the company enjoys a reasonable period of maturity. As time goes by, however, leaders may forget its essence, which can lead to the decline stage. Let's look at the metaphors in parts II and III to navigate the challenges or S-Curve stages and their transitions.

Part 2: Strategy

Chapter 4: Physician

The Physician metaphor helps you know your organization's actual status so you can choose a general direction for it. It is often said that "prescription without diagnosis is malpractice" and good doctors always start with a diagnosis. They don't begin treatment simply because you have pain. When leaders find themselves in a new situation, they must do what doctors do – make a diagnosis to know the real status of the organization.

As a leader, you must also know the vital signs of your organization in the form of KPIs (or key performance indicators) and SWOT analysis. You must analyze the internal and external factors affecting your organization before making strategic plans.

Chapter 5: Architect

Use the architect metaphor to articulate your vision when starting anything new. This can help develop a realistic plan to bring your vision to reality.

When in their studio, architects sketch out what seems to the owner like a finished product, and make detailed drawings for different teams involved in the construction. What architects do in their studio must be like what leaders do during the S-Curve preparation stage.

Once the architect's design (or a leader's implementation process) is ready, it's time to oversee it. Leaders must closely supervise the implementation of the strategic plans, especially during the start-up stage. They must also have openness and flexibility to engage in open-vision processes. Regardless of the vision you choose, make sure it gets implemented so you don't end up with an abandoned project.

Chapter 6: Builder

Before laying the first block, a building contractor must understand the architectural plan and specifications. Builders usually start from the ground up once they know the blueprints. More than anything else, the foundation determines the strength and stability of the structure.

People are the foundation of your business. As a leader, you need the right people to ensure your organization continues to thrive well in the future. Like a house, an organization must be built with quality for it to last. Remember, organizations are built when people work, not scramble for credit. Getting the job done should be your primary focus as a leader.

Chapter 7: Engineer

Engineers solve problems and improve on what already works. They do this with curiosity, persistence, and creativity. Just like engineers, leaders need to be problem-solvers. Every stage on the S-Curve comes with problems where the engineer metaphor can prove useful.

Always start with the basics of how things work each time you encounter a problem. See problems as opportunities. Solve problems, but be careful about creating the cobra effect. Think carefully before implementing solutions. Always ensure your organization experiences constant improvements.

Chapter 8: Entrepreneur

In any situation, the leader must use the entrepreneur metaphor to produce tangible results.

Since you are one of the most important building blocks of your organization, you have important goals. Even if you don't aim to change the world, you can learn great lessons from entrepreneurs. Understand the meaning of ownership and optimism and infuse them into your undertakings. Learn to take calculated risks and bring out substantial outcomes.

Ownership starts with what's not yours. It is a mindset, not a status. Just like an entrepreneur, leaders must work for the best outcomes for their organization, even if they will not get any direct benefits. Use optimization to overcome setbacks and take risks in pursuit of results that matter. Manage your risks carefully and take risks only after careful analysis. Engage your people in your leadership ideals and push them toward making a difference in the world. Always ensure your ideas are worth the commitment of others.

Part 3: Tactics

Chapter 9: Journalist

Metaphors require defined objectives for them to function efficiently. Without a strategy, your tactical efforts may not generate meaningful value. As with the strategy section, getting reliable information is where tactics start.

The journalist metaphor tells us that a good decision not conveyed properly may not realize its intended objective. Therefore, leaders can learn from journalists how to communicate clearly and confidently with stakeholders.

The most relevant lessons to glean from journalists include obtaining reliable information and keeping others in-

formed. Powerful information can be acquired when you're close enough to the action you hear from primary sources.

While gathering information is critical, what you do with it is of greater importance. After obtaining information, journalists organize and deliver their findings to their audience, allowing them to form their own opinions. Leaders can learn from journalists how to write "real stories" for their stakeholders, teams, and customers.

Chapter 10: Coach

Coaches can teach us how to select and train teams. They teach us the importance of delegation and competition. Leaders must value character and competence equally. Coaches don't criticize things they don't understand. Similarly, leaders should be careful to observe before advising.

Like great coaches, great leaders don't need external constraints to value their time. They set their goals and timelines to achieve them as if they were running for gold at the Olympic Games. Results will not always be in our favor. When this happens, as a leader, you must own up to your mistakes and focus on ways you can improve by tapping into the spirit of sportsmanship.

Chapter 11: Parent

Parents provide an exciting metaphor for leaders who seek to leave a legacy. It helps them prepare those who will take their organizations to greater heights long after their departure. This metaphor is very personal and has a lot of emotions.

Good leaders, like good parents, understand the importance of emotional intelligence. They also know how to establish healthy boundaries. Leaders train juniors to maturity to create sustainable organizations.

Chapter 12: Judge

Leaders must use the metaphor of a judge to resolve conflicts within a team. They must understand the laws applicable to their sector or jurisdiction so they don't mistakenly commit fraud.

Leaders must also humble themselves when they realize they haven't lived up to the standard. Instead of giving excuses, they must own up and clean up before they move on. Without such remedial action, a leader's lack of credibility can stand in the way of fair judgment. Finally, as a leader, you should create a system where an aggrieved party can assert their right to appeal when needed. This can enable

you to correct your mistakes without external intervention.

Chapter 13: Pilot

Following the pilot metaphor can help leaders learn many things. For instance, most airplane accidents happen during takeoffs and landings. Similarly, more corporate bankruptcies occur during the start-up and decline stages of their lifecycle. Learning from pilots can help leaders improve the safety records of their ventures and minimize bankruptcies.

Just like how flying requires training and certifications, different levels of business management also require structured training and leadership development programs to achieve organizational goals. Leaders must constantly learn from business incidents and prevent reoccurrence. Just like a pilot, they must prepare for all possible outcomes and train themselves and their teams for the unexpected.

Chapter 14: Soldier

Soldiers are on the frontline of warfare. They risk their lives in service of their country or cause. The rigorous training of soldiers exemplifies qualities such as discipline, courage, and loyalty. By observing them, leaders can learn how to handle tough situations confidently.

Discipline, in leadership, relates to having a sense of purpose and relentlessly focusing on it until you see the result. The very act of pursuing your goals demands a great deal of courage. The soldier metaphor gives the leader the discipline and courage to make good decisions in tough situations while also being loyal.

Chapter 15: Diplomat

Leaders can apply lessons learned from diplomats to give and receive feedback positively. They can learn how to negotiate for good outcomes in different situations. As you work in a group of any size or kind, diplomacy will also help you synergize seamlessly. It will help you respond to sensitive situations with tact instead of fury and wisdom instead of flattery.

Part 4: Seamless

Chapter 16: Synergize

Now that you've explored the important metaphors of leadership, it's time to understand how you can blend them seamlessly into your role. In an era of interconnectivity, cooperation is no longer by choice but a necessity.

We need to join with others to create synergy to be successful. Fortunately, essential elements such as adaptability, collaboration, and humility can help.

Adaptability is a team trait that emerges when team members alter their roles to address a challenge. It requires team members to be flexible and creative. Adaptability requires a good level of shared understanding. There are people you need who you will not be able to hire. Yet without their help, some opportunities will be lost. In this case, collaboration will be your best option. Aside from tapping into the power of adaptability and collaboration, leaders must understand the importance of humility. Being humble makes it much easier to lead others. Moreover, in humility, when you take on a new role, you will value what others have done before your arrival.

Chapter 16: Start!

A versatile leader is a person of integrity who, with others, creates valued outcomes using appropriate metaphors. You don't have to be a superhero to become a versatile leader. You simply need to make up your mind and then start.

Kick off your journey using the journalist metaphor to identify the urgent things. Then use the physician metaphor to gain insight into the strategic status. Finally, as you progress toward your journey, deploy the rest of the metaphors to bring out the best results from every situation you face.

Conclusion

At this point, I will assume you've read the earlier chapters and have gained a good understanding of the core ideas presented. I want to congratulate you on your perseverance.



Msuega Tese is an African entrepreneur based in Luanda, Angola. Tese draws from three primary sources to provide a fresh perspective on leadership: lessons he learned growing up in a rural Nigerian village, his experience as an engineer and entrepreneur, and his Christian faith. He is the cofounder and executive director of Integrated Solutions Angola. Tese graduated with an honors degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Port-Harcourt, Nigeria.

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