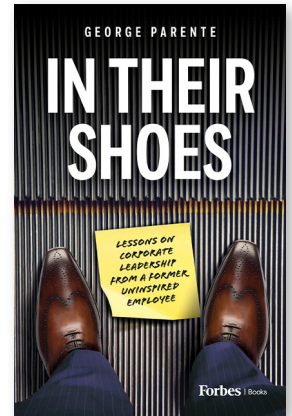


In Their Shoes

Lessons on Corporate Leadership from a Former, Uninspired Employee

by **George Parente**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Leadership goes beyond just ensuring your team completes a list of tasks or accomplishes a set of goals. Great leaders prioritize empathy and understand the value of putting people first.

The book *In Their Shoes: Lessons on Corporate Leadership from a Former, Uninspired Employee* urges us to explore the question, “Will I want to be treated the way I treat my subordinates?” Throughout the book, you explore different leadership styles, learn to lead by example, empower your team through transformation, extend support by thinking beyond yourself, and ultimately become the leader you wished you’d had.

By blending insightful personal anecdotes with a set of action steps directed toward bringing positive transformation in the workplace, the author inspires us to lead our teams from a position of empowerment and empathy.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- About Contingency, Situational, and Transformational leadership.
- How to cultivate trust and lead by example.
- How to encourage team participation through servant leadership.
- How to empower, motivate, and support your team.

Introduction

The reason for me to write this book was to highlight the importance of leadership – not only in business but also in our everyday lives. Looking at my life, I noticed a lack of effective leadership in the education system, among our political leaders, and among the management in the different companies where I worked during my first decade in the workforce. I hope anyone who reads this book is inspired to become the leader they always wished they had in their life. On the following pages, I give you a behind-the-scenes look at my leadership evolution, and I share why concepts such as contingency leadership, situational leadership, and transformational leadership have made a profound impact on my life.

During our journey together, I hope to help you see the only way a leader can effectively lead others is if they have walked in the shoes of those they lead.

Part 1: Contingency Leadership

Chapter 1: It's All About People

As someone who had always been fascinated with psychology, I realized the only way I would ever last at an organization was if it was built around people and not just profit.

As CEO, I'm always looking for opportunities to set my employees up for success. I want to help them get the best contracts and increase their salaries so they can have more time to do what they love outside the office. Almost every one of our seventeen employees has been with DTG Consulting Solutions for over 10 years. As a result, there is a sense of camaraderie and trust we have with one another. If you're reading this book, chances are you, like me, long to be a part of something bigger. We want to work in an organization that makes people the number one priority. We want to work for people who have walked in the shoes of those they lead.

Chapter 2: Different Leaders for Different Seasons

Because business is all about relationships, our approach to leadership must shift based on the personalities we lead and the situations we face. This is what many refer to as contingency leadership.

Contingency leadership is both relationship and task-based, and it focuses on what type of leader would be the best match for different circumstances or settings. The three variables of contingency leadership include the degree of confidence that followers have in their leader, the degree to which

the structure of the task is clearly identified, and the amount of authority a leader has to discipline or reward followers.

But how can you know if you are the right leader to lead your team through your current situation? The answer comes down to whether you are willing to adapt to the situation before you. Adapting isn't always enjoyable. But it's the only sustainable way to lead an organization forward. Effective leadership is not always easy. It takes a lot of work. But the key is accountability. By taking accountability for your work, you can build a culture people trust and value.

Chapter 3: Lead by Example

Leadership starts with how we lead ourselves. Leading an organization well starts with approaching each workday with positive energy and the attitude of a professional. Part of leading by example is knowing our limitations. It is about following the positive examples of those who have walked before us.

Leading by example is not natural for some. While leadership is wonderful, it can sometimes feel very uncomfortable. Often, it doesn't feel "natural" to move into a managerial setting, and people are unsure how to respond to the change. When I encounter someone like this, I encourage them with that timeless sentence of wisdom, "Fake it till you make it."

The best leadership happens through empowerment. As we learn, grow, and develop, we empower those around us to do the same. One of the ways I empower others is by telling them where I want the company to go and letting them tell me how we will get there.

Part 2: Situational Leadership

Chapter 4: The Importance of Situation Leadership

Situational leadership is when a leader uses a different style to adapt to a situation. Contingency leadership means the effectiveness of a style is contingent upon the situation.

When you have the right leader for the situation, the next step is to ensure the leader is using the right leadership approach with each person they approach. The situational leadership model often rests upon the leader's ability to appeal to the maturity level of their followers. "Maturity" refers to the subordinate's capabilities and willingness to focus on a particular task or objective.

The success of a situational leader depends on their ability to recognize whether their subordinates require more task-

based or relational-based guidance and to adhere to those needs by adjusting their leadership style. The six styles of situational leadership include:

- Coercive leadership, where a leader sees a problem and needs it fixed instantly.
- Authoritative leadership, where the leader paints a compelling vision but lets the team choose the specific route they want to accomplish that vision
- Democratic leadership, where everyone has a voice
- Pacesetter leadership, which is all about leading by example
- Coaching leadership, where leaders work with their employees one-on-one to produce the best results.

Trust is one of the most important elements of situational leadership. Employees need to know that leaders have their best interests in mind.

Chapter 5: Encourage Partnership Through Servant Leadership

A large component of situational leadership is encouraging worker participation through servant leadership. This leadership style begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.

Having the heart of a servant is critical. The primary focus of servant leadership is providing support to those who follow, thus motivating these followers to engage with those they lead in a similar fashion. The idea behind servant leadership is that leaders sacrifice their own needs for those of their followers. When a leader practices servant leadership, they are spreading leadership throughout their organization by putting a subordinate in the role of a leader and the leader in the role of a subordinate. When this happens, the company's culture changes as the subordinates increase their confidence and knowledge. Thus, new leaders emerge within the organization.

Chapter 6: Empower Through Transformation

The transformational style of leadership is one of the most popular theories of leadership today, in part because of its ability to translate across cultural boundaries while being applied to more situations than many of the other studied theories of leadership. The main premise of transformational leadership is to formulate a vision for subordinates to focus on a higher order of intrinsic needs and organization-

al goals. This is accomplished by having transformational leaders who inspire followers through motivation to become engaged in their work- thus sharing in the vision of the organization.

Transformational leaders use four components to empower people on their teams: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Because the transformation leadership theory creates a strong bond between leaders and subordinates, this leadership leads to long-lasting benefits between leaders and subordinates.

Chapter 7: Support Through Thinking Beyond Yourself

After you have empowered people on your team, the next step is to make sure you provide them with the support they need. One of the primary ways to support subordinates is by getting out of their way and trusting them to make the right decisions. This empowers people to grow at a faster pace because they don't always have someone looking over their shoulders. They feel the freedom to operate without a sense of fear.

When it comes to supporting people on your teams, it's not one or two major action steps that make a difference. It's a series of strong decisions that show your team members you value them and you're willing to back up what they say. Leaders who support their teams well embody what it means to walk in the shoes of those they lead.

Chapter 8: Be the Leader You Wished You Had

Much of what motivates my style of leadership stems from the lack of leadership models I've had in my life along the way. People have no problem working hard for someone who cares. But they have little time for those who misuse the trust they place in them.

In most organizations, employees learn to walk on eggshells around their boss and say all the right things because if they don't, they'll suffer the consequences. Being the leaders we wished we would have had is one of the driving motivations that allows us to lead others as though we are walking in their shoes. It's seeing a team member's present situation, doing some personal reflection, and thinking about how we would like to be treated if we were in their position.

One of the reasons leaders struggle to lead in the shoes of those on their team is that they have short memories. They forget those times when they were treated poorly and how

an inconsiderable boss made them feel. But strong leaders never forget where they've come from and lead their teams from a position of empathy and understanding.

Part 3: Transformational Leadership

Chapter 9: It Starts with Trust

Trust holds an organization together. The reality of trust is that it can take years to develop but moments to lose. When trust is lost, it is seldom regained.

Trust starts with ethical leadership. When we talk about being a person others can trust, we're talking about the importance of being an ethical person. More than ever, we need leaders who are governed by a set of ethical principles they will not violate.

Ethical leadership encompasses the duty to perform the job functions morally to avoid negative behaviors and encourage praiseworthy behaviors. Leaders and organizations are potent sources of influence due to their positions and authority. When developing a corporate culture, leaders must emphasize creating a culture centered on high moral values. They must create a culture in which employees act with integrity, take responsibility, and are held accountable for their actions.

Chapter 10: How to Think Like a Servant Leader

While the concept of servant leadership is often espoused by business leaders today, the real value of servant leadership is only realized when it changes the way one thinks, acts, and leads. Servant leadership as a theory alone results in a lot of nice rhetoric about putting others first, but the underlying motivations are often self-serving. Every business manager is for being a "servant leader"- as long as it gets others to do what they want them to do. However, the essence of servant leadership is serving others in ways that are beneficial to them. It's about looking out for the general well-being of those on your teams.

Leaders with the hearts of servants are always willing to do things that aren't glamorous to make their world a better place. Being a servant leader is a 24/7 responsibility. It's who you want to be all the time, not just during the moments you are in front of your team. If you want to be a strong servant leader in the workplace, my suggestion is to start by being a servant leader at home and in your community. Pick up trash. Make the morning coffee. Do those tasks that are below others. And before long, you will condition

your reactions to be those of the heart of a servant.

Chapter 11: Create a Transformational Leadership Culture

When you walk in the shoes of those you lead and have the heart of a servant, the culture in your organization starts to change. The key to a great culture is to find great people. If you don't have people of character and competence, you'll end up spinning your wheels as you attempt to create a strong culture. You need great people, and then, you need to get everyone on the right seat on the bus.

Be beyond hard skills, and focus on evaluating the soft skills of your applicants. These skills are hard to measure and are closely related to an individual's personality. They include communication skills, work ethic, and the ability to work with others on the team. The seven characteristics to watch out for prospective team members include past work experience, ambition, cultural fit, clean social media accounts, positive attitudes, employee referrals, and employee value.

A leadership role requires you to put on many hats at once. It requires you to make tough decisions that can shift the direction of an entire organization. Great leaders must fully utilize their knowledge and skills to make suitable decisions for their firm's growth. You must be skilled at assigning tasks and assessing your team's performance. This responsibility also includes the allocation and management of resources.

Fear of failure is one of the most significant barriers that can stop you from settling into a leadership role. To push away self-doubt, you must remind yourself that you got the position for a reason. Failure is just another opportunity to learn, after all. Transitioning into a leadership role also brings on the challenge of handling disagreements among group members, both proactively and reactively. You should learn how to identify and address smaller concerns that are likely to turn into bigger issues later.

Chapter 12: Craft a Vision Worth Achieving

The concepts such as situational leadership, servant leadership, and transformational leadership sound great on the page. But they play a beautiful tune when you start to put them into practice. The key is to capture a fresh vision and know where you want to go.

Just as it does little good to start a journey without a target destination, it is pointless to lead an organization forward if you do not know where you want to end up. This is where

the importance of a strong vision statement comes into play. Creating a vision statement for your company is just like deciding on a destination for your journey. This statement describes your company's direction, making it a crucial part of the company's identity. A vision statement refers to the document that defines the current and future goals of your business for all the stakeholders, including employees, customers, and investors.

Conclusion

Leadership never stops. It's a continual process. And the key is to never lose sight of what matters most. It's showing up when you'd rather give in. It's having the heart of a servant when you're tempted to lead like a dictator. It's never losing sight of where you have come from. And it's always about walking in the shoes of those you lead.

I hope that the principles shared in this book will challenge you to take your leadership journey to the next level. Contingency leadership, situational leadership, and transformational leadership are more than just terms on a page. They are the principles to be lived out every day.



George Parente has worked at DTG Consulting Solutions, Inc. for over 22 years. He was hired as the Chief Financial Officer in April 2000. And in October of 2021, he became only the second Chief Executive Officer that DTG Consulting Solutions has had in its 50 years of operations. Currently, he is responsible for overseeing all business operations at DTG. He also continues to manage the financial operations, including banking and borrowing relations, budgeting and forecasting, financial statement preparation, payroll, and cost analysis.

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