

The Path to Becoming a Purposeful,
Courageous, and Resilient Leader



LEADING FROM YOUR CORE

OBI ABUCHI



PREFACE

"We desperately need more leaders who are committed to courageous, wholehearted leadership and who are self-aware enough to lead from their hearts."

- BRENÉ BROWN

Many leaders have lost their way. You could even argue that, around the world, within our political institutions, commercial enterprises, voluntary groups, and religious organisations, very few leaders ever found the path to effective, engaging, and transformational leadership in the first place.

It might sound like an insanely damaging indictment, but I say it soberly. Also, I genuinely don't think most of these leaders intentionally want to be ineffective or diminish their impact. Speaking from personal experience, many of us are either simply looking in the wrong place, have a faulty leadership paradigm, or have poor examples around us.

Let me explain.

My first experience of working closely with very senior leaders in business was a defining one for me. It was a few years after graduating. I had been hired as a train systems engineer and accepted on to the graduate development programme of an engineering and construction firm with responsibility for a multi-billion-pound schedule of improvement and maintenance of the London Underground.

I didn't really enjoy the engineering side of the role, but I was lucky. Only eighteen months into the programme, I secured a six-month placement to shadow the managing director of our sister company.

I attended many key meetings, including some board meetings and one-to-ones, and engaged in various projects with senior leaders and middle managers, on behalf of the managing director. I observed what it was like to be at the helm of an organisation – the power, the authority, the resources at your disposal – and to be completely honest, I didn't always like what I saw.

The managing director, in particular, was extremely intelligent and experienced, yet he had a reputation for berating the life out of those working for him. If he felt someone was incompetent and hadn't done something to his standard, they would know it, along with every other person within earshot of them. He instilled fear into many as he asserted his authority and intelligence.

Even though I got on well with him, enjoyed our one-to-one conversations, and learnt a ton during the six-month stint, after that experience, I promised myself that if I ever had a chance to lead people – choosing between leading by asserting my authority, intelligence, superiority, and power or from a place of genuine, positive influence – I would choose the latter.

Since then, over more than two decades, I have developed a passion for leadership, grown as a leader, held various leadership positions, and studied some of the best leaders and leadership experts on the planet. I have become fascinated by the difference that truly effective, inspirational, and transformational leaders make to those around them.

I have asked myself:

- What is it that helps them to see the potential in pretty much everyone around them?
- What is it that drives them to inspire and equip others to dream more, think more, believe more, learn more, do more, and become more than they ever thought possible?
- What is it that enables them to earn the deep respect of others and unleash the best in them during the good times and the extremely tough times?
- What have they learnt about the secret of positive influence?

In this book, I will share some of the answers with you, especially because this sort of leadership not only transforms lives and leads to healthy and thriving organisations and communities, but it also creates a better world. And that is something I am desperately committed to.

Now, let me ask you a question. I would really like you to take some time to pause before you answer it: **Is the way you are leading *really* working?**

[I encourage you to pause for a few minutes and take some time to reflect on your answer to that question before moving on.]

When asked a question like that, our minds easily go to the standard metrics for assessing leadership effectiveness:

- Business results.
- Employee engagement scores.
- Share price.
- Merger success.
- Customer satisfaction scores.
- Business transformation.
- Sales pipeline.
- Revenue generated.
- Market share.
- Volunteer engagement.

Forget all of that for a moment. I want to take this much further and deeper by considering not only the way you *lead* but also the way you *live*.

What is it like for the people under your influence?

Is the way you lead enabling those around you, from all walks of life, to truly thrive? Is the way you lead inspiring others to bring the best of themselves – their motivation and talents and creativity and passion – to whatever endeavours they are engaged in? Is the way you live adding tremendous value and meaning to your life and the communities you are a part of? Is the way you live and lead helping you to develop burnout resilience, maximise your energy, and increase your positive impact on the world?

As you will soon discover, this is not merely a book on effective leadership. This book is about helping you step back and courageously look deep within yourself, at your humanity, your life, your vision and values, your worldview, your beliefs, and your habits. It is about helping you examine the foundations of who you really are, so that you can truly live your best life and inspire the best in those you influence – at home, at work, at school, in organisations, and in communities – during the good times and the tough times.

As well as experiencing greater effectiveness and impact in your leadership, the fruits of going on this journey include a clearer sense of purpose and fulfilment, peace amid personal and professional storms, increased mental fitness and fortitude, deeper connections with others, greater alignment with your best self, and the clarity that you are being and living as you were designed to live.

This is a journey that will transform the way you lead from the inside out.

While writing this book, I pulled together some of my most potent leadership insights from over two decades, including my experience of working with, training, and coaching leaders in giant corporations and voluntary organisations. In addition, I interviewed over 60 leaders¹ from a variety of organisations all over the world on the topics of leadership effectiveness, personal mastery, burnout, and resilience. They were extremely generous with their time and honest about their experiences. I am thrilled to share many of their insights and stories, in some cases anonymously, straight from the battlefield and the line of fire, so to speak.

I believe deeply that this book is a stimulating and thought-provoking read that will move you to take action that not only helps you become a more effective, purposeful, engaging, and transformational leader, but also a better husband, wife, dad, mum, friend, son, or daughter.

So, enjoy the journey, take courageous action, and GROW!

Obi Abuchi
September 2021

¹ In this book, you will sometimes see this symbol ★ next to someone's name. It indicates that that person is one of the leaders I interviewed.