

→ **FOCUS**

- Leadership
- Corporate Culture
- Organizational Change

→ **STYLE + SUBSTANCE**

- Between his first book, *Start With Why*, and his follow up with *Leaders Eat Last*, it’s quite obvious that Sinek is interested in teaching those that lead to do it in a humane way.

→ **TWEET ABOUT IT**

- Description of this book in 140 characters or less.

  Empathy and trust are the keys to leadership, show it to those you lead, and it will be reciprocated.

  click to tweet >>

→ **PURPOSE**

- The purpose of these FlashNotes is to optimize your leadership skills so that those you lead can perform optimally as well. Every FlashNote extracts the most actionable, high-value content possible so that you can forget about sorting through the fluff and instead prepare yourself to apply what matters most to you.

→ **YOU SHOULD READ THIS IF…**

- You want fast, actionable, research-driven leadership guidance — personally and professionally
- You are a current or aspiring leader of a team, organization, or business of any kind — OR — if you desire to learn the skills of high performing leaders, quickly.
- You’re unsatisfied with the current status of your organization, and you want to do something about it.
- You like the idea of reading forty-thousand+ words in about ten to-fifteen minutes.

**YOU MIGHT ALSO WANT TO KNOW…**

This FlashNote is part of our Leadership Series — as such, the commentary will be focused on providing leaders at any level of any organization — for-profit or non-profit — with actionable insights from the book. We do our very best to remove every ounce of fluff from our FlashNotes, so all you’re left with is content you can put to use immediately — not a year from now.

But you don’t have to be in a “leadership position” to put this content into action. Maybe you’re an aspiring leader. Maybe you’re in a leadership position currently, but have a desire to lead more effectively…

...or maybe you have no desire to lead at all, after all, we’re all leaders to some extent — even if it’s on a personal level.
Perhaps you want to influence other leaders to become better, maybe you want to inspire those that do not lead to step-up to the plate.

Whatever your reasons may be, these FlashNotes are written for those that lead... In the end, if you've picked this up to learn something new that you can apply right away, well, then YOU are already a leader... regardless of title.

True leadership begins as a personal endeavor and ends up being cultivated into a professional one (should you choose to take on the responsibility). Leadership — like many aspects of life — is a choice we make on a daily basis.

Enjoy,

—Deano

Dean Bokhari,
Founder, {flashnotes}
www.leadersTIP.com/flashnotes
#1. RECOGNIZE THE HUMAN NEED FOR SAFETY

“If certain conditions are met and the people inside an organization feel safe among each other, they will work together to achieve things none of them could have ever achieved alone. The result is that their organization towers over their competitors.”

Provide cover from above >> Simon kicks off part one with a story about a US soldier named “Johnny Bravo” who courageously risks his life, day in and day out, for his fellow comrades. When asked why he would sacrifice his life in the line of battle for other people, he answered: “because they would have done it for me.” Point being: “I look out for others because I value other people —whether they’re in my “inner circe or not— like I value myself and those I’m closest to.” The role of leadership is to provide cover from above

Put people first, profit second >> It’s important that we value people OVER profit, and not the other way around! When this is done, it helps people feel valued and trusted. When people trust each other, all sorts of great things happen… things like “Synergy” — the term originally popularized by the late great Dr. Stephen Covey in his classic book, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Synergy occurs when people create something greater when they’re together than they could’ve ever created on a solo basis. Synergy only occurs when trusted collaboration is in place.

Actionable insights >>
- Put people before profit.

#2. CULTIVATE YOUR CIRCLE OF SAFETY

“The whole purpose of maintaining the Circle of Safety is so that we can invest all our time and energy to guard against the dangers outside. It’s the same reason we lock our doors at night.”

Sinek’s Circle of Safety tells us that we should focus on helping each other rather than “one-upping” each other to make management happy. It also tells us that when we know + trust that the people inside the Circle of Safety will look out for us and protect us from the dangers of the outside, we’re more likely to freely exchange information and ideas that will move the organization forward vs keep things to ourselves because we’re afraid someone might “steal” our idea.

So, what’s amongst one of the biggest habits you can develop in order to cultivate your Circle of Safety?

Actionable insights >>
- reminder - use empathy.
**#3. EMPATHIZE**

“exceptional organizations all have cultures in which the leaders provide cover from above and the people on the ground look out for each other. This is the reason they are willing to push hard and take the kinds of risks they do. And the way any organization can achieve this is with empathy.”

**Empathy is a crucial commodity** these days, and we need leaders like Johnny Bravo in our corporations and companies; in our businesses and organizations… To truly lead. Because when people know that their leaders are providing protection from above, they can work hard on the ground, without being concerned about the dangers of the outside. (Empathy = the ability to recognize or share the feelings of another.)

**Actionable insights >>**

- Treat employees with respect and dignity and I'll see the benefits (as results) in every dimension of my life... including business!

**A core tenet of workplace management**, human relations, leadership, and basically everything else in life, is that when we feel hopeless and devastated (like many of us do with our work situation) about some area of life, and we feel like we have no control, then the result is rarely positive (at least until we overcome it).

**Lack of control at work = stress + emotional strain.** One in three employees considered leaving their jobs in 2010-2011 (according reports from consultancy firm Mercer, LLC). This tells us two things:
1) that there are A LOT of people that want to quit their jobs, and/or
2) people feel like they’ve got no other option but to stay put (due to money, family, and insecurities about being unable to find other work)

**When the environment at work is** one of encouragement, and one that meets the basic human needs to live, to learn, to feel valued and significant, we do more than just survive — we thrive. We soar higher than expected. It’s the leadership’s responsibility to set up the right conditions/environment for this to happen. We do not have the power to “change people”. We must enhance the environment. “Change” —whether good or bad — is the result of environment. And if we want to see “change” — we need to focus less on ourselves and more on others/“the team”/organization/etc...

Peter Drucker once said:

“The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say ‘I’. And that’s not because they have trained themselves not to say ‘I’. They don’t think ‘I’, They think ‘we’… They think ‘team’. They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don’t sidestep it, but ‘we’ gets the credit. This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done.”

I believe Drucker’s statement encapsulates the central point that Simon tries to drive home with the Circle of Safety idea that this book is based around.

**Actionable insights >>**

- work daily on making sure I contribute + cultivate an attitude that’s embodies “WE” before “ME” within my organization, team, business, etc.
#4. LEARN TO USE YOUR “HAPPY” CHEMICALS

“Some believe we should always put others first—that if we don’t look out for the group, the group won’t look out for us. Others believe we should always put ourselves first and that if we don’t take care of ourselves first, then we would be of no use to anyone else. The fact is, both are true.”

Based on the quote above, Simon sets the stage for an all out analysis on why we do what we do. And with his background in biology + anthropology, he starts explaining what makes us tick through the four chemicals in our bodies. 80% of the book is based around these four chemicals and how they drive those of us in leadership roles.

Get to know the four “happy” chemicals in your brain + body >>
We have four chemicals in our bodies that work towards driving our behavior:
- Endorphin: the pain-masking chemical
- Dopamine: the goal achieving chemical
- Serotonin: the leadership chemical
- Oxytocin: the chemical of love

Simon calls the first two “Selfish” and the second two “Selfless”.
- “Selfish” chemicals: Endorphins and Dopamine. These work to help us get things done.
- “Selfless” chemicals: Serotonin and Oxytocin. These work to help strengthen our social bonds, fostering connection and collaboration.

Endorphins + Dopamine are the chemicals of progress, as they make us feel good when we achieve goals and accomplish various things. So what’s the problem? Most leaders operate with fear-based tactics like the old “command + control” model of management — which has not only been proven NOT to work, but has also been shown to spike our egos and get dopamine surging through our bodies. Often making US feel good at the expense of others. And that’s bad. Really bad. It’s so bad that it usually bites us in the butt… What’s worse, Endorphins + Dopamine are highly addictive.

For example: ever hear of a “runner’s high”? That’s just endorphin surging through your body. It’s there to mask the pain we’re putting our bodies through when we beat up our muscles in the gym, or run for long periods of time. Endorphin was useful back in the paleolithic era when hunters would go all day long in the grueling heat or freezing cold, hunting for food… Endorphin would kick in at just the right time to mask the pain and make us feel good enough to get our bodies to keep moving, and eventually, to capture the prey… It’s likely that hunter-gatherers became addicted to hunting, much like some of us become addicted to weight-lifting.

Dopamine is the dangerous chemical — but only when abused. Cocaine, nicotine and alcohol all send dopamine surging through your system.. The reason we get addicted to this stuff is because it provides near-instant gratification/pleasure — which, again, is just dopamine making you feel good. You know what else sends dopamine through your system? Goals. Tasks. The gratification of crossing off that jar of almond butter on your grocery list. That awesome feeling you get when you click that little box and see the check-sign show up your favorite productivity app. Dopamine was put into place by Mother Nature to incentivize us to move forward with what we’ve committed ourselves to doing by giving us little bursts or “hits” of dopamine whenever we take a small step towards its achievement. The problem though, is that even the “good” things about dopamine can get addictive. And when
Serotonin + Oxytocin are the chemicals of contribution, trust + belonging. When we include these two chemicals in our 4-way cocktail, the result is a healthy (and necessary) synergy that results in more cooperation and more collaboration… but those are just poo-poo office words to some people. “What about the tangibles”, they say. Well, if you’re looking for measurable results and “tangibles” that show up in the “numbers” — you’ve got to STEP AWAY from the spreadsheets and the computer screen; you’ve got to get out of the board room, you’ve got to do more than blast off a memo here and a memo there — you’ve got to show em’ that you care and show em’ that you’re there. You’ve got to be there not as a cheerleader for the good times, but as a leader that gives a damn - regardless of the ebbs and flows of the economy.

How to put these warm + fuzzy chemicals to use >>

Sinek tells a great story about a company that almost went faced a severe financial crisis — and yet they STILL refused to cut their staff… Not to say they didn’t discuss layoffs, but it was an absolute last resort as opposed to a quick-fix resolution that CEOs of today jump at without a flinch in order to balance the books, let alone manage an economic crisis. This particular CEO however, care about his people and he wanted to avoid firing any of them… Want to know what he did? He instituted a ‘furlough’. This means that every employee (CEO included) was required to take four unpaid weeks off from work per year in order to balance the inevitable financial blows that threaten the survival of any thriving business or company. Because the leader of the company refused to let his people go when the company hit hard times, the people in the company came together as one to see to it that the organization would make it through the tough times and prosper once again. All of this begins with one person: the leader.

Actionable insights >>

- as a leader, I understand that the buck stops at my desk -- that said, I'm going to ensure I foster an environment like the example above, so that those I lead feel safe, secure, and inspired at work.
- If I'm ever in a financial bind, I'll be sure to reserve layoffs as THE FINAL option -- NOT the first.

#5. MANAGE THE CORTISOL, MANAGE THE STRESS

When we’re under extreme pressure - whether at home or at work - our bodies blast off a chemical known as Cortisol… and this, my friend, is our worst enemy.

Cortisol is a good thing in VERY small doses, but in today’s high-demand workplace environment where the shareholders are putting pressure on the executives and the execs are putting pressure on the managers and the managers are putting still more pressure on the soldiers that make the whole place tick in the first place — you’re looking at a disaster… And you wanna know the sad part? A huge chunk of the American workforce (over 50%) is subjected to this type of cortisol-inducing management. This results in worker dis-engagement, stress, emotional instability, lack of performance, heart-problems - the list goes on and on. But the real question here is this: so how do we deal?

Well, for starters, we can STOP complaining and commanding and controlling people and START working together. One of the most effective ways to combat stress is to find a way to collaborate and connect with someone else.
How to keep the evil cortisol at bay (as much as possible)

A great example of this is when the author tells the story of two opposing politicians who barely knew each other, that is, until they were placed in an environment (one of those typical “collaboration” conferences/summits) that was conducive to their mutual capability to connect without feeling like they’ve got to keep their guard up to block any political punches from the other side. The result? Well, once they got back to DC after the summit, they continued the bond they would’ve never formed if they’d never attended the event that brought them together. They ended up working together on a number of successful bills and pieces of legislation. Though they didn’t have to agree (obviously), they were able to draw mutually beneficial agreements for their respective parties. Cool stuff eh? So, what can YOU do to instill this type of stress reducing, cortisol eradicating, good-vibe inducing environment in your own place of employment.

**Actionable insights**

- More FaceTime ASAP (…and not on my iPhone either!) -- I gotta have as many face-to-face interactions as possible.
- Back away from your email client. I’m gonna walk down the hallway, and have a face-to-face no-strings-attached conversation with my peeps. I know I can’t do it all the time, but the bonds that form when I stop by a team-member’s desk just to say hello -- well, now I know that means a lot to em.
- Drop the Command and Control style of leadership: It makes me look like an egomaniac (which I might be) -- plus, people resent me when I try to control them so I’m not gonna do it anymore!

**#6. IDENTIFY + ELIMINATE ABSTRACTION**

“Cooperation and mutual aid work better than competition and rugged individualism.”

Treat people like people — not like statistics >> When people are represented as numbers and percentages on a spreadsheet, it gets a heck of a lot easier to lay-off 4,000 employees. GET FACE-TO-FACE. Don’t let growth stifle your ability to lead. Get to know your people. Doing this prevents us from treating them like metrics.

Distance leads to abstraction... >> which in turn can lead to aberrant behavior. We have a tendency to do things at a distance that we normally wouldn’t do in a face to face interaction. Consider this: people tend to be quick to flip you off while they’re driving on the highway, because to them, you’re just another driver on the road that got in their way… do you think they’d do that if you stepped on their shoe by mistake while you were both waiting in line at the bank?

Probably not.

That said, what makes us think we’d act any other way when we decide to lay people off during a “business review”?

**Actionable insights**
Use the magic number: 150  
A key study by professor Robert Dunbar from Oxford, as cited in the book, asserts that peeps work best in groups that cap out at around 150 people. Any more than that, and it gets hard for us to remember each other, build rapport, and form the bonds of trust that we need to form in order to be effective as groups, organizations, and/or businesses.

When I have thousands of people working with me in my business, I'll chunk those thousands down into groups of 100-150. Same protocol for all teams/groups: cap 'em off at 150.

Empower my management  
Leaders can manage at scale by empowering management to STOP managing by control and START taking on the role of leadership. This means they've got to start taking responsibility for, and developing trust amongst the teams of people they lead.

I gotta show em' that they matter  
When people donate to companies like charity: water (www.charitywater.org) — an organization that brings clean water to people in need — they send supporters a photo of the well their money is helping pay for. Cool, eh? As human beings, we love this type of thing. Why? Because when people can see what type of difference they're making, they're likely to do and contribute more. We're cooperative by nature. It's in our biology.

#7. IT AIN'T ABOUT THE Moolah

“Money is an abstraction of tangible resources or human effort. It is a promissory note for future goods or services. Unlike the time and effort that people spend on something, it is what money represents that gives it its value. And as an abstraction, it has no “real” value to our primitive brains, which judge the real value of food and shelter or the behavior of others against the level of protection or safety they can offer us. Someone who gives us a lot of money, as our brains would interpret their behavior, is not necessarily as valuable to our protection as someone willing to commit their time and energy to us.”

If someone told you that they donated $1,000 to a charity last weekend — you'd probably think to yourself, “great, yah want a cookie?”. But if someone mentions they volunteered a few hours of their time at a homeless shelter last weekend — you'd probably think to yourself, “hey, that's really nice, maybe I should do more”.

Actionable insights  
As leaders, we must volunteer our time and energy into showing those we lead how much we care. Setting goals and measuring results is great, but before we pay out those bonuses, it’s just as important that we couple those dopamine-based drivers with our own time and energy.
#8. PASS ON THE POWER TRIPS

“I can’t delegate my legal responsibilities, I can’t delegate my relationships and I can’t delegate my knowledge. Everything else, however, I can ask others to take responsibility for.” — Captain Marquet

Simon tells a story about the Captain quoted above and the leadership lessons he learned as he underwent a transition from the “command and control” style of leadership to a more sustainable style of leadership that involved everyone within his scope influence.

“What is so remarkable about these three responsibilities” Sinek says, referring to the captain’s quote, “is that though they cannot be handed off, they can all be shared. And that’s what the best leaders do.”

**Actionable insights >>**

- As leaders, we don’t concern ourselves with hoarding what we know, we share it. We don’t concern ourselves with taking the spotlight, we share it. We don’t waste our time pretending like we know it all, we ask someone who does. And when we’re rewarded for what we’ve done, we do not take the lion’s share and throw a bone to our subordinates... we share it.

#9. DO NOT PLAY THE BLAME GAME

“Some current members [of Congress] blame “the system” or the speed with which news is able to spread in a wired world for their struggles and low approval ratings. However, they ignore the fact that they are the system and the internet doesn’t do them harm; it simply reports on the harm they do.”

—Simon Sinek (on the members of Congress)

**Leaders of any organization are just as responsible** for taking accountability as the members of Congress are — for profit or non-profit — it doesn’t matter. By now, it’s obvious that taking on the role of leadership means a heck of a lot more than wearing a shiny little badge. The organization you lead is a DIRECT reflection of your capabilities as its leader.

**Actionable insights >>**

- **Let’s not play the blame game with one another and start taking accountability.** Let’s not point fingers anymore. Let’s take charge and begin to hold one another responsible for the results of what we do. Progress rarely comes about when we say things like “it wasn’t me, it was them or him or her or X’s fault”. The only thing that results from playing the blame game is collapse... sometimes it’s slow and steady, other times it happens over night, but when people don’t take responsibility, the organization’s credibility goes straight out of the window along with everything else they stand for.”
#10. TRAIN THOSE LEADERSHIP MUSCLES

“Good leadership is like exercise. We do not see any improvement to our bodies with day-to-day comparisons. In fact, if we only compare the way our bodies look on a given day to how they looked the previous day, we would think our efforts had been wasted. It’s only when we compare pictures of ourselves over a period of weeks or months that we can see a stark difference. The impact of leadership is best judged over time.”

Love that… Leading for the long-term is a win-win-win for everyone because short-term fixes, though they may seem like the best decisions at the time, are nothing more than shortsighted means of immediate gratification.

And when so many CEOs only hold their positions for no more than a few years, they base their decisions on their OWN best interest for their OWN short tenure as leader of the organization. In other words, when Mr. Joe the CEO leaves his position after only three years — he’s more concerned about short-term gain at the cost of the company’s long-term health and prosperity. It’s selfish.

Sinek solidifies his argument that leading for long-term is better than leading for the short-term by comparing two such leaders of two large organizations — both of which you’ve probably heard of:

➔ The short-term leader: Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric
➔ The long-term leader: Jeff Sinegal, former CEO of Costco

Sinek compares GE vs Costco by measuring profits via the rise and fall of their stocks, and then connecting those ebbs and flows to the decisions made by the leadership.

Here’s what he found:

➔ GE / Jack Welch / Short-term leadership:
  ✦ Profits at GE were like a roller coaster ride due to irrational decision making without regard for long-term implication
  ✦ Every year Jack would fire the bottom 10% of his managers at GE to balance the books
  ✦ GE did indeed make profit, but it was more like rolling the dice and gambling with lives of employees for selfish gain — this is not strategy, this is a man on high on dopamine

➔ Costco / Jeff Sinegal / Long-term leadership:
  ✦ While Welch was striking fear into the hearts of his managers, Jeff Sinegal was concerned about giving his employees a raise — at a time when the US was in an economic crisis… Sinegal would say that they should be helping the employees in bad times, not letting them go.
  ✦ Costco’s stock was (and still is) stable and predictable — nothing exciting about it, just great, clean, predictable progress, performance and profit… when you’re the 2nd largest retailer in the country, predictability is better than spontaneity.

Actionable insights >>

❖ Judge leaders not on what they do while they’re leading, judge leaders based on what happens AFTER they leave.
❖ Recognize, as Costco does, that your employees are like family. Treat them accordingly.
❖ Lead with the best interest of the organization and its people FIRST and foremost, by cultivating a strong Circle of Safety through empathy + trust.
Simon Sinek hits another home run with Leaders Eat Last. The ultimate storyteller, his books do an excellent job at echoing the message he delivers in his speaking engagements.

The message is simple...
..the buck stops at the leader’s desk. In other words, those of us that lead may not always understand the impact our leadership roles actually have. The depth and breadth of leadership cascades down from the executive board to management, which in turn cascades down to the soldiers that march in and out of the battle field of the organization on a daily basis shaping the culture of the environment… which comes full circle back up to the one that leads, as a direct reflection of his or her leadership.

It’s also worth noting...
..that Sinek used almost every major financial institution as an example of corruption (Merrill Lynch, Wells Fargo, Citigroup, etc) … which I see as no surprise, as most of them are aberrant by design, but we won’t get into that here. Sinek also dives into example after example of how major corporations, like Goldman Sachs lost touch with what originally served as the foundation of their success. This happens when the leadership sets up an environment that is the very opposite of the Circle of Safety, pitting employees against one another, which in turn sets up a scarcity-based “me-first” mentality that places priority on profits before people. Bad.

But it wasn’t all negative. In fact, almost every example of bad leadership was contrasted with an example of leadership one can aspire to strive towards becoming. Organizations like NextJump, 3M, and even the Marines were applauded as extraordinary examples of cooperation, collaboration, and creativity… and they weren’t just canned stories either. Many of them were stories of leaders (with and without formal authority) who exemplified the character traits, values and ethics that most of our so-leaders of today could learn a thing or two from.

New perspectives on age-old concepts about human behavior (that not enough of us subscribe to).
Though there weren’t any new principles introduced in this book — the traditional leadership theories of yesterday were updated with examples and stories that illustrate the reality of workplace conditions today. And most of the principles were delivered with near-flawless impact. The Circle of Safety is very similar to Dr. Stephen Covey’s ideas, who, as Sinek mentions in the acknowledgements of his first book Start With Why, influenced him quite a bit… BUT, if you look at who originally influenced much of Dr. Covey’s work, you’ll find that a great deal of it originates from books written by Peter Drucker. And if you look into who influenced Peter Drucker (which I haven’t), you may find that many of his ideas came about as a result of someone else’s influence.

The bottom line is...
..that very few ideas are actually “new”, but the way in which they’re actually presented is often worth reframing for the times. That said, Sinek has done a stand up job at crafting stories based on real-life studies and situations that drive his points into the “heads and hearts” of the reader… they certainly did for me.
SIMON SINEK

AUTHOR OF “LEADERS EAT LAST”

Sinek is an optimist. He believes in a bright future and our ability to build it together.

Described as “a visionary thinker with a rare intellect,” Sinek teaches leaders and organizations how to inspire people. With a bold goal to help build a world in which the vast majority of people go home everyday feeling fulfilled by their work, Sinek is leading a movement to inspire people to do the things that inspire them.

A trained ethnographer, he is the author of two books: the global best seller, Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action and his newest book, Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don’t. Fascinated by the leaders and companies that make the greatest impact in their organizations and in the world, those with the capacity to inspire, he has discovered some remarkable patterns about how they think, act and communicate and the environments in which people operate at their natural best. He has devoted his life to sharing his thinking in order to help other leaders and organizations inspire action.

He is best known for popularizing the concept of Why and for the talk he gave on the subject that became the second most watched talk of all time on TED.com.

DEAN BOKHARI

AUTHOR OF THIS FLASHNOTE

Dean believes in living through giving. He believes we can change the world by doing meaningful work that serves the greater good.

- Founder of FlashNotes
- Best-selling author + speaker
- Fluent in five languages
- Activist
- Passionate student of life.

Dean teaches people and organizations how to inspire + empower people in a positive way.

He is the founder of LeadersTIP, a California-based consulting firm in Orange County.
With a bold mission to change the world through Leadership -- Dean and the LT crew are teaching leaders how they can move the world forward and move their organizations forward - at the same time.

He speaks five languages and holds a B.S. in Political Communication from Virginia Commonwealth University, where he also studied Philosophy. He currently resides in Brea, CA with his wife, Amna, where he is also an active supporter of resource-based economic systems and global sustainability.

Connect with Dean on twitter here >>

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