



# The Leader's Way

by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Laurens van den Muyzenberg  
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## Focus

### Leadership & Management

Strategy  
Sales & Marketing  
Finance  
Human Resources  
IT, Production & Logistics  
Career Development  
Small Business  
Economics & Politics  
Industries  
Intercultural Management  
Concepts & Trends

## Take-Aways

- No one can achieve satisfaction in life through self-driven desires.
- Suffering is part of life. The key is finding ways to alleviate it.
- Businesses motivated solely by profit are vulnerable to deceit and corruption.
- Organizations that lack stated values and principles will drift aimlessly.
- Companies with vision and purpose can thrive by serving others with their work.
- Meditation trains the mind to make responsible choices. It does not require prolonged solitude; in fact, you can meditate in different forms throughout the day.
- Moral and ethical concerns must guide all actions and decisions.
- Leaders who follow the principles of "Right View" and "Right Conduct" ensure rational behavior. These concepts are the path to "a calm, collected and concentrated" mind.
- All human beings should strive to develop "The Six Perfections": "generosity, ethical discipline, patience, enthusiastic effort, concentration" and "wisdom."
- Globalization and change are realities leaders must deal with constructively.

## Rating (10 is best)

Overall	Applicability	Innovation	Style
<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>

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## Relevance

### What You Will Learn

In this Abstract, you will learn: 1) How Buddhist concepts, such as “Right View” and “Right Conduct,” can help you be a calmer, more focused leader; 2) Why leaders in business and government have a universal responsibility; 3) How Buddhist philosophy can help leaders address world problems; and 4) Why leaders must meet the challenges of change and globalization.

### Recommendation

The Dalai Lama is a monk and a spiritual leader who has both feet planted firmly in the real world. Not content with being one of the world’s most recognizable religious figures, he advocates for social and economic change through the application of Buddhist principles. His collaboration and 10 years of conversation with management consultant Laurens van den Muyzenberg – clearly reported here – offer a blueprint for being a better leader and a more satisfied person, and for contributing to solving world problems through integrity, respect and sensitivity toward others. In this book, the Dalai Lama uses wise practicality to teach conscious leadership and to urge people to follow their instincts for good. *getAbstract* recommends these teachings to those who are interested in how spiritual concepts apply to leadership and business.

## Abstract

*“I am not interested in creating more Buddhists. My interest is to present Buddhist concepts that are acceptable and useful to people from all religious faiths, and to those without any religious faith.”  
(His Holiness the Dalai Lama)*

*“Leadership that acknowledges universal responsibility is the real key to overcoming the world’s problems.”*

### Buddhism and Business Do Mix

Happiness and contentment have become increasingly difficult to find, although everyone shares these innate desires. Buddhism recognizes that human beings cannot find satisfaction through materialism. The pursuit of wealth, power and possessions is a frustrating cycle. True happiness is possible only through good friendships and relationships. Leaders who adopt this approach can create an environment in which moral and ethical considerations shape people’s actions. Sensitivity to others’ needs leads to increased interaction and cooperation, and helps alleviate some of the suffering that Buddhists believe is an inescapable part of life. While Buddhism addresses basic philosophical issues, such as mankind’s role in the universe and the origins of good and evil, it focuses primarily on behavior.

Buddhism teaches that self-confidence is a person’s “greatest treasure.” Yet, many leaders, despite outward appearances, lack self-confidence “because they are not sure that what they are doing is right.” Self-confidence results from making well-informed decisions that weigh all the elements involved. Effective leaders minimize distractions, particularly in interpersonal relationships. Paying close attention when someone speaks conveys the message that you care and establishes a bond of trust. With such trust, the possibilities are endless.

Recognize that things change. Nothing stays the same. Tomorrow, you may have to re-evaluate today’s decisions. To develop a healthy perspective, accept the reality of change. Leaders often refuse to acknowledge negativity in their organizations. They are slow to take corrective action, hoping problems will just fade away, so they often wait until it’s too late. Living in the past, regretting bad decisions or holding grudges for perceived injustices is counterproductive, toxic and inefficient.

*“Nothing exists that is permanent; nothing exists that is independent; nothing exists without a cause.”*

*“This is one of the greatest challenges in society today, how to cope with an increasing rate of change.”*

*“Accepting change as a permanent and inescapable aspect of life is very important.”*

*“According to Buddha, the greatest treasure humans can have is self-confidence.”*

All human beings – especially leaders – should strive to develop “The Six Perfections”:

1. **“Generosity”** – The pursuit of wealth, power and fame has destroyed many leaders and their organizations. Generosity means giving others credit and emphasizing teamwork. Respected leaders often are modest about their accomplishments.
2. **“Ethical discipline”** – Money and influence are not inherently evil if people acquire them morally and ethically. Leaders who succumb to greed will sacrifice others and put their organizations at risk by following their evil impulses.
3. **“Patience”** – Some events require swift action, not patience. But, individuals who have learned patience often are better prepared for dealing with adversity and criticism. Patience means maintaining composure when confronted with anger.
4. **“Enthusiastic effort”** – Leaders who are truly committed to their goals and ideals tend to be energetic and passionate. They motivate others, creating waves of momentum.
5. **“Concentration”** – Good leaders focus on one issue even amid multiple responsibilities. They don’t worry about past failures or future threats; they deal only with the present.
6. **“Wisdom”** – Those who apply the principles of “Right View” and “Right Conduct” have the perception and insight to deal with reality while recognizing that change is constant. Take the consequences of today’s actions into account.

### **The Right State of Mind**

Acting with Right View and Right Conduct means approaching decisions with calm focus and collected minds. Good leaders think about how their actions will affect themselves and others. They try to ensure that their motivations are genuine. Feelings of insecurity, anger, fear and resentment prevent leaders from making sensible decisions. Individuals who are ruled by emotion will not act rationally, but Buddhism teaches that people can perfect their minds and, with diligent practice, remove negative thoughts and emotions from their decision making. In an ideal world, a leader’s actions would not harm anyone. Realistically, most decisions benefit some and damage others. The idea is to seek a remedy that causes the least suffering.

The solutions to the world’s biggest, intractable problems – the economic crisis, widespread poverty, environmental deterioration and hostile relationships among countries – ultimately rest with leaders in government and business. Since their actions affect thousands or even millions of people, they must make the correct decisions. They can gain insight by exploring and using Buddhist philosophy, but Right View and Right Conduct are not automatic. Leaders must train their minds to make intelligent, unemotional decisions and analyze situations quickly. Buddhists see meditation as a proven way to exercise the mind. Although setting aside quiet time to meditate is best, a typical day holds numerous opportunities to practice meditation and seek serenity. Scientific studies have shown that meditation causes positive changes in the brain. Just practice these basic techniques:

- **“Walking meditation”** – This method helps develop “mindfulness,” the ability to recognize and then dismiss negative thoughts and emotions. Pay close attention to how you walk. Be aware of your steps and how you place your feet. Note the thoughts that your mind processes, then refocus on your walking.
- **“Sitting meditation”** – With this technique you pay attention to your breathing instead of your walking. Sit cross-legged on the floor or in a firm chair. Deeply inhale and exhale 24 times before resuming a normal breathing pattern. Drop any wandering thoughts and focus on your breathing. Walking and sitting meditations bolster concentration.

*“Buddhists believe that bad actions will have inevitable negative consequences on the person who committed the action.”*

*“The effect of bad actions can be reduced by subsequent good actions. This is referred to as the law of karma.”*

*“Profits are a condition for survival, but their purpose is to make a contribution to the well-being of society at large.”*

*“The acceptance of universally binding standards of human rights is essential in today’s shrinking world.”*

- **“One-pointed meditation”** – To use this more challenging technique, concentrate your mind on one object or image – such as a coin, a painting, a color or the ocean. Some people close their eyes; others prefer not to do so. Limit your thoughts to only the object.
- **“Analytical meditation”** – This involves investigating and analyzing your emotions in order to deepen your understanding of yourself and improve your quality of life. For example, you could choose a destructive emotion such as envy and begin analyzing its negative effects on your health and interpersonal relationships. Through many repetitions, you would start to comprehend the true meaning of envy and learn how to prevent it from hurting you. Analytical meditation works with any concept or notion.

### **The Right Way to Do Business**

Corporate scandals prove how damaging greed can be. Executives seduced by money and power jeopardize their firms. CEOs who make fortunes while denying their employees decent salaries create unbalanced, unhealthy and mistrustful corporate environments. Big business faces the formidable task of winning back the public’s trust. To re-establish credibility, organizational leaders can apply the following principles of Right View and Right Conduct:

- **Exhibit social responsibility** – Organizations can no longer ignore environmental or human-rights issues. Leaders must scrutinize their labor practices for fairness.
- **Conduct business ethically** – You can be successful and honest at the same time. Believing that you have to cheat to survive perpetuates a vicious cycle of dishonesty.
- **Prioritize excellence** – Companies that hire the best people, use quality materials and earn customers’ loyalty turn words into action. They put Right Conduct into practice.

### **Keep the Faith**

Effective leaders possess many admirable traits, including the ability to instill faith. Employees must believe in their leader’s integrity, motives and vision for the company’s success. Workers who lack faith in their leaders are not motivated to put forth maximum effort or embrace a common objective. The leader’s capacity for establishing the organization’s vision and purpose is equally important. Since finding happiness is the real objective in life, an organization’s leader must show that having happy employees is a priority. The company’s leader is also responsible for establishing its foundational values and principles, which should include:

- The expectation that employees will behave ethically and deal with their colleagues and customers honestly and fairly.
- The firm’s intention to improve the lives of others through its goods and services.
- The company’s desire to be involved in the community and support charitable causes.
- The organization’s commitment to do business with integrity and with sensitivity to environmental concerns.

Strong leaders set the tone for their organizations through strength of character, modesty, intelligence, business acumen, determination and vision. Being a leader, particularly of a large corporation, is exceptionally demanding and fraught with numerous daily challenges. Leaders are paid to make tough decisions – many of which will have long-term effects – and painful choices.

Individuals who train their minds through the application of Buddhist principles are much better equipped to meet the challenges of leadership. They will not act rashly or

*“The purpose of life is to be happy.”*

*“There is nothing wrong with being happy when wealth increases, but it is wrong to become unhappy when it decreases.”*

*“Wisdom supports faith by guiding it in a steady direction and sustaining it with perseverance.”*

emotionally – or allow their egos to cloud their sensibilities. They will strive to make the most sensible decisions after gathering the necessary information. Leaders who practice mindfulness will not get too carried away with success or overly distressed about setbacks. With sufficient practice, Right View and Right Conduct can govern a leader’s entire decision-making process.

### **Profiting with Integrity**

Buddhist philosophy veers sharply from the traditional Western notion that profit is business’s primary motivation. Buddhism teaches that profit is a natural byproduct of conducting your operations responsibly and focusing on customer satisfaction. According to the Buddhist view, nothing is inherently wrong about making money. Problems arise when profit becomes the main focus, since it can breed dishonesty and corruption.

Used properly and with the right intentions, wealth brings happiness to others and a sense of satisfaction to the benefactor. Wealthy people who generously support charitable causes show they understand their responsibilities to the world. Those who are rich should not become too attached to their money and become stingy for fear of losing it. Indeed, insightful individuals understand that their fortunes can rise and fall for reasons they can’t control. Yet, as nothing is wrong with wealth, nothing is particularly noble about poverty. Early in his life, Buddha tried living in a forest with little to eat but he didn’t find happiness. In fact, he believed that poverty led to “immorality and crime” and that a better standard of living would reduce crime. He observed that people with sufficient means are less likely to cause problems for society.

### **We Are the World**

Economic crises prove that globalization and interconnectedness are here to stay. Housing, banking and employment problems in the U.S. in 2008 and 2009 sent shock waves throughout the world, proving that no nation can sustain isolationism any longer. Globalization frightens many people because the landscape changes constantly and humans instinctively desire permanence. But business and government must accept the reality of globalization and meet its challenges.

Global corporations are demonstrating increased sensitivity to cultural diversity. IBM waded into uncharted waters by having “country nationals” instead of Americans run its European affiliates. IBM is also creating prayer rooms in some U.S. and Canadian offices for its growing number of Muslim employees. Progressive organizations show their global concern by promoting tolerance and attacking stereotypes. Clearly, economic integration is most effective in a free-market system. Despite its imperfections, capitalism allows for “freedom of thought and religion,” and has the potential to raise the standard of living for millions mired in poverty. The creation and distribution of wealth is important, but solutions to the world’s problems depend on leaders who are willing to acknowledge their universal responsibility.

## **About the Authors**

**His Holiness the Dalai Lama**, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, advocates for human rights, world peace and solutions to environmental problems. **Laurens van den Muyzenberg**, an international management consultant, has lived and worked in many countries and speaks seven languages.