

“Urban Meyer”
Lessons in Leadership and Life from a Championship Program
Urban Meyer and Wayne Coffey
Book Note~ Dave Kraft

Leadership is influence based on trust that you have earned. A true leader is someone who is going some place, taking people with him, and enables people to achieve things they wouldn't achieve on their own. Talent cannot replace leadership. Leaders take teams beyond talent to a place they likely thought was unreachable. Being on a mission to lead people to achieve exceptional things. If I've learned one thing, it's that you have to be true to yourself. You will not be successful as a leader if you are constantly changing directions. Leaders are learners. Leadership is a skill, and like all skills it takes time and effort to develop.

Average leaders have quotes. Good leaders have a plan. Exceptional leaders have a system. Honesty and its first cousin, accountability, are the heart of what we do, and that goes for everybody, staff and players alike. Your football system gets better when your leadership system gets better. If you want to achieve your purpose, allow no splinter groups with their own agendas, or the whole thing will implode.

In the old days Urban got furious. Now, he gets curious. Pushing hard without trust doesn't work. Urban does a great job of communicating the why. That's what his emphasis on clarity of purpose is all about. Urban makes sure that everything that is done at OSU football has purpose. There is nothing accidental. Urban focuses on the powerful combination of these elements: clarity of purpose + deep trust + high standards + consistent accountability + tools that empower. To me, the essence of life and leadership is change and growth. I truly believe in the maxim that if you are not getting better, then you are getting worse.

Leadership isn't a difference maker. It is the difference maker. A leader is someone who earns trust, sets a clear standard, and then equips and inspires people to meet that standard. Run toward problems. If you ignore them, they only get worse. Where the coach's job comes in is to get great players to play great.

We teach watching out for BCD. Blame (others), complain (about circumstances), and defend (yourself).. Beware of BCD. Blame, complain, defend has never solved a problem, achieved a goal, or improved a relationship. Stop wasting your time and energy on something that will never help you. Ruthlessly eliminate BCD from your life.

I left my home for the office at 5:30 the next morning, my usual time. I love what I do. I love the daily challenge of leading a team and building a culture

E + R=O—Event + Response=Outcome

We don't control the events in life, and we don't directly control the outcomes. But we always have control over how we choose to respond. There are six R Factor disciplines that we teach to our players.

R:1 Press Pause

R:2 Get Your Mind Right

R:3 Step Up

Your R is most important when the E is most difficult. Big Es and Big Os require Big Rs. Resilience is one of life's most important attributes.

R:4 Adjust and Adapt

It is foolish to resent or resist change. If you don't like change, you are going to like irrelevance even less.

R:5 Make a Difference

You don't get the team you want—you get the team you build.

R:6 Build Skill

Talent is a gift. Greatness is a choice. Exceptional performance is the result of an uncommon level of focus and discipline in the pursuit of greatness. Complacency is the enemy of exceptional. If it doesn't challenge you, it will not change you. We are not measured by our intentions, but by our actions. Once strategy has been developed, success becomes a matter of attitude and effort. It is no secret that the critical factor in the success of a business is the quality of its leaders.

Weak culture will undermine even the best strategy. One of the biggest mistakes leaders make is failing to hold people accountable for behavior that is inconsistent with the culture. If you permit it, you promote it. There will always be resistance when you're demanding change. Build the culture. The results will come. Great effort can overcome poor execution, but great execution cannot overcome poor effort. Conviction is depth of belief; consistency is the duration of it.

Success is achieved by focused and sustained action. Goal clarity is essential, but so is process clarity. Relentless effort (not talent or intelligence) is the key to achieving great things in your life. Opportunities multiply as they are seized.

I've never been in a football game where the team that played the hardest didn't win. Elite performers don't get to that level by accident, but through great coaching and careful attention to preparation. Excuses don't get you anywhere around here. If you screw up, I don't want your explanation, and I don't want drama. I want your ownership. Sometimes the problem isn't the problem. Sometimes, the bigger issue is how you respond to the problem.

Exceptional teams are built on a foundation of deep trust. Trust is earned through your behavior, not granted by your position. And it is earned through repeated behavior over time. Trust is earned through how you behave in three areas: Character, Competence, and Connection. Players do not experience your intentions; they experience your behavior.

When a team is aligned, everyone understands and is fully committed to the team's purpose, culture, and strategy. There are the laissez-faire leaders. They don't demand enough. Their standards are not clear, and they don't hold their players accountable. On either end of the spectrum—too controlling or too permissive—you lose alignment, performance suffers, I don't have any hard data to back this up, but I'd guess that alignment problems result in many more lost football games than any shortage of talent does. even though they were good football guys, they were not a good fit for our system.

Bill Belichick has often told me, "Always bring in people who can enhance what you do without changing the basics of what you do." Bring in people who believe in what you are doing and will help you make it better. Seeking out only those kids I think will have the best chance for us to stay aligned with what we teach and how we train. Achieving alignment requires effective leadership. Avoid the extremes of command and control and leniency. Find the balance. Time is a nonrenewable resource. If you waste it, you never get it back, so it's essential to pick your battles wisely.

"I can't relate to lazy people. We don't speak the same language. I don't understand you. I don't want to understand you." ~ Kobe Bryant. A pile of numbers is not nearly as important as how hard a guy works and how driven he is to get better. I have learned that being elite is not about how talented you are; it's about how tough and committed you are to getting better. The real power of your leadership is not your level of authority, but your level of influence. If your habits don't reflect your dreams and goals, you can either change your habits or change your dreams and goals."

So much of leadership comes down to knowing the people you are leading and providing them with what they need to succeed. "Failure is not fatal, but a failure to change might be." ~ John Wooden." It's never easy to read people's capacity for change. Every team or organization consists of three groups:

1. The top 10 percent: Disciplined, driven, self-motivated, want to be great, and work relentlessly.
2. The 80 percent: The majority; those who do a good job and are relatively reliable.
3. The bottom 10 percent: Disinterested and defiant.

The key to success is moving as many of the 80 percenters into the top 10 percent as you can.

Every great leader I have been around or studied has demonstrated the unique ability to think. Leadership is a mindset first and a skill set second. If you don't think like a leader, you won't act like one. They can memorize and regurgitate, but can they think and act when it really matters? Teaching people what to think is one thing, but teaching people how to think is altogether different.

William Deresiewicz, a gifted author and essayist gave a lecture at the United States Military Academy at West Point titled "Solitude and Leadership."

His central point was that true leadership comes from within. It comes from a deep introspection into your beliefs. But if you can't put aside distractions long enough to be alone in reflection, formulate your own ideas and opinions, then you are handicapping your ability to think, make decisions, and lead. Standard, conventional, cookie-cutter thinking will not enable you to be the leader that your situation requires.

“Thinking means concentrating on one thing long enough to develop an idea about it. It seems to me that solitude is the very essence of leadership. However many people you may consult, you are the one who has to make the hard decisions. And at such moments, all you really have is yourself.” William Deresiewicz

The greatest visionaries in every field have that gift for looking ahead. Here's the bottom line: Exceptional leaders think about common things in an uncommon way.

I will do whatever it takes for as long as it takes. Strength of will is not about the commitment to start, it's about the commitment to continue. Making your R stronger than any E. When confronted with difficult situations, elite performers waste zero energy worrying or engaging in BCD behavior.

“The brick walls are there for a reason. The brick walls are not there to keep us out. The brick walls are there to give us a chance to show how badly we want something. The brick walls are there to stop the people who don't want it badly enough.”~ Randy Pausch.

Under pressure, you don't rise to the occasion; you rise or fall to the level of your training. On a team, belief is a force multiplier. A leader is someone who inspires and empowers people to get to places that they wouldn't be able to reach otherwise. Leadership is more about trust you have earned than the authority you have been granted.

It must be an intentional and dedicated pursuit, a single-minded mission to reach inside people, unlock their potential, and inspire them to reach a new level. There can't be change without challenge, or growth without discomfort. I am a member of an elite team of warriors, a group of men with an uncommon commitment to a common purpose.