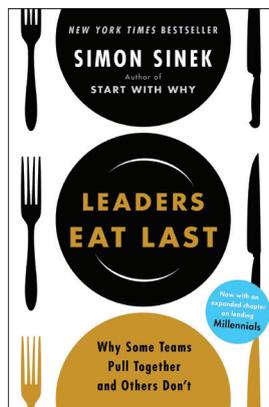




**LEADERS EAT LAST**  
BY SIMON SINEK



## THE BOOK


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## INTRODUCTION

Leadership is not management. Leadership is a responsibility and sacrifice. According to best-selling author Simon Sinek, leadership means eating last. To paraphrase Lieutenant General George J. Flynn, no organisation was ever managed out of a disaster; they were led. Sinek brings thought and perception to his guide to 21st-century leadership. He investigates what makes leaders great and explores how leadership makes a difference to any team. From ancient times to the modern day, Sinek outlines how leaders have done their job. Even more importantly, he backs up his theories on making leadership work with solid science and historical context.

Using real-life examples, Sinek makes it clear how important true leadership is and how getting it right can make or break a business. *Leaders Eat Last* is a lesson in putting other people first and how doing so can change the way your business works.



## 5 BEST QUOTES

**“We are not victims of our situation. We are the architects of it.”**

**“You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him.”**

**“The true price of leadership is the willingness to place the needs of others above your own. Great leaders truly care about those they are privileged to lead and understand that the true cost of the leadership privilege comes at the expense of self-interest.”**

**“Children are better off having a parent who works into the night in a job they love than a parent who works shorter hours but comes home unhappy.”**

**“Leadership takes work. It takes time and energy. The effects are not always easily measured and they are not always immediate. Leadership is always a commitment to human beings.”**



6 BIG IDEAS

## 1. SAFETY

People need to feel safe. Sinek proposes that no enterprise will be truly successful if there is no 'circle of safety'.

One example he cites is a company that implemented a policy preventing employees from being fired except in the most serious circumstances. Employees, feeling safe and secure in their jobs, were able to concentrate deeply on their work and even share problems without fear of being laid off.

When a person lives in fear and stress, it causes an increase in the chemical cortisol in the brain. Cortisol, known as the stress hormone, puts you on a sense of high alert. This is useful if you are an ancient man and have seen a rustle in the bushes. It makes you ready for the worst. However, in the modern day, the rustle in the bushes is the threat of being laid off, and it is continuous.

Cortisol should come and go rapidly and not linger in our systems. High levels of cortisol are linked to high blood pressure and more serious health problems. Creating a circle of safety helps to reduce cortisol and makes for a happier, healthier, and more productive workforce.

## 2. CHEMICALS IN THE BRAIN

Cortisol isn't the only chemical in the brain that is important to leadership.

Sinek outlines the selfish chemicals, endorphins and dopamine, and the selfless chemicals, serotonin and oxytocin, as being crucial in how we relate to others.

### • THE SELFISH CHEMICALS:

Endorphins mask physical pain with a sense of mild euphoria. You might have heard of the runner's high when a runner is pushing themselves to the limit and begins to feel exceptionally good. This is the result of endorphins.

Endorphins can be problematic in modern times because we so rarely have to push ourselves to this extent and yet our systems still crave endorphins on occasion.

Dopamine is the chemical that creates incentives. It's what makes you feel good when you accomplish a goal. Without that feeling, there would be little incentive to do any work.

Unfortunately, dopamine is highly addictive and is also released by nicotine and alcohol as well as activities like gambling. The hunt for dopamine can be extremely destructive.



## 6 BIG IDEAS

#### • THE SELFLESS CHEMICALS:

Serotonin is released when you feel support and praise from others. It helps people to feel accountable and to seek cooperative activities. It is a crucial part of how humans became social animals and why you seek out the approval of others.

Oxytocin is the ‘love chemical’ and is responsible for feelings of friendship, love and deep trust. It drives you to be generous and is vital in successfully raising children. Without it, there would be no drive to care for others, and humanity would never have thrived.

These four chemicals rule the way we interact with people. You can see how, while the selfish chemicals have their place, they should not be what drives leadership. The drive for dopamine can destroy companies while relying instead on serotonin and oxytocin will create circles of safety.

### 3. YOUR WORKERS, YOUR CHILDREN

The selfless chemicals are the reasons why Sinek praises organisations that see their workforce as their children.

You can't fire your children (or your parents for that matter). They can't be replaced because they are far too precious.

Workers, staff or students should be seen the same way. If they must be seen as a commodity, then they are the single most important commodity.

In return for being treated as vital, a leader's subordinates will be loyal and hardworking. Workers who love their job or students who enjoy coming to school do so because they know they are valued. As a result, they are far less likely to start looking elsewhere.

### 4. WHY WE HAVE LEADERS, AND WHAT WE EXPECT OF THEM

Leaders make the decisions. In ancient times, leaders were given privileges beyond that of the rest of the tribe. They had the first choice of food and the pick of the best partners.

However, in return for these privileges, leaders were expected to be there on the front line when danger approached. Their privileges came with heavy responsibilities.

We still feel the same way about our leaders. We are happy for a president to have a private plane and to live more than comfortably. However, we still expect certain sacrifices from them.

This is why people are angered when CEOs or other high-level executives lay off staff before taking a pay cut themselves. They are displaying the privilege of leadership with none of the sacrifices.



## 6 BIG IDEAS

## 5. TRUST

Trust runs both ways. If you want to be trusted as a leader, you have to place trust in your workforce.

How can an employee who is constantly monitored and checked up on feel trust towards those who appear to have no faith in them?

You can't ask someone to trust you while displaying strong distrust for them. Workers who are given freedom and feel that you have faith in them will be far more likely to trust you back in kind, and it is vital that people be able to trust their leaders for many reasons including the next point.

## 6. KNOWING WHEN TO BREAK THE RULES

Sinek shares a practical example of why it can be necessary to break the rules. In short, imagine a plane will crash unless the air traffic controller makes the decision to break the rules by allowing it closer to another aircraft than regulation allows or following the rules and having the plane inevitably crash.

In one real-life scenario, a veteran air traffic controller broke the rules and thereby saved hundreds of lives.

This is the faith that we need to be able to place on the shoulders of our leaders. We need to trust our leaders and know that they will make the right calls and not live rigidly within the rules.

## 7. THE MODERN STRUGGLE

In modern times, at least for most people in most developed countries, the struggles are not the same as they were for our ancient ancestors. Food, shelter, and clothing are all abundant. The modern struggle has become very different.

However, there is still always struggle, and the modern structure of work and business does little to remove the struggle.

When a quality leader sees the struggle and does everything to counter it, teams will work much better together.

Almost more importantly, though, leaders must join the struggle. Employees who see their leaders making sacrifices for the sake of the company will be far more willing to do the same.

While a leader is, by definition, separate, they are still part of the team, and other team members expect them to act accordingly. Remember that leadership is sacrifice, not power, and you will be on your way to becoming a great leader.

**3 ACTION STEPS****1. CREATE SAFETY**

People will do their best work when you create a circle of safety. When people feel a lack of safety, cortisol (the stress hormone) is triggered. High levels of cortisol are not only related to health issues like high blood pressure and heart attacks; there is also the fact that cortisol prevents people from working effectively.

**2. CREATE TRUST**

People who trust you will do better work for you. The trick is that trust runs both ways. Your staff will only trust you if you show them trust in return. Have faith in your workers, and they will return that faith with gusto.

**3. LOOK HARDER FOR DANGERS INSIDE THAN DANGERS OUTSIDE**

Civilisations are rarely murdered. They are destroyed from within by incompetence and greed. Don't fear outside dangers but rather be on the lookout for those that strike from within. You can always deal with the competition, but if you don't stop internal problems quickly, then you are doomed.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

The key takeaway of Leaders Eat Last is that leadership is a responsibility. As a leader, you should put yourself last and not first. Businesses and companies that prioritise people over other resources tend to thrive the most in the long run. People are the most precious resource. By putting people first, you also establish trust because trust goes both ways. As a leader, you need to think hard about how you treat people and what your priorities are.



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