



In an era of constant change, there is a crying need for leadership. Although change is a constant, today's magnitude, speed and depth, is unlike previous renditions. Multibillion dollar businesses emerge from nowhere. Highly-valued institutions and organizations are rendered impotent over-night.

Yet, many cling to choosing future leaders on the basis of superficial personal traits and characteristics. How many times have you heard an anointed future leader described as "intelligent," "a commanding presence," "a great communicator," "having a bold vision," or "a born leader?"

Ram Charan, a consultant with a Harvard Business School MBA and doctorate, has identified, eight skills - he calls them "know-hows" - essential for leadership success:

1. **Positioning and Repositioning.** The ability to find an idea for the organization that meets customers' demands and makes money and changing this business model as needed.
2. **Pinpointing External Change.** The ability to identify patterns that place the organization on the offensive and the ability to leverage change to the advantage of the organization.
3. **Leading the Social System.** The ability to get the right people with the right behaviors and the right information to make better decisions and business results.
4. **Judging People.** The ability to calibrate people based on their actions, decisions and behaviors and matches them to the job's non-negotiables. Talent selection and development.
5. **Molding a Team.** The ability to coordinate competent, high-ego leaders.
6. **Setting Goals.** The ability to balance goals that give equal weighting to what the business can become and what it can achieve.
7. **Setting Priorities.** The ability to define a path and direct resources, actions, and energy to accomplish goals.
8. **Dealing with Forces beyond the Market.** The ability to deal with pressures you cannot control but affect your business, such as regulatory events.

Citing case studies from his consulting practice, Charan identifies personal traits of leaders that help or interfere with the know-hows.

1. **Ambition.** The drive to accomplish something but not win at all costs.
2. **Tenacity.** The drive to search, persist and follow through, but not too long.
3. **Self-confidence.** The drive to overcome the fear of failure and response, or the need to be liked and use power judiciously but not become arrogant and narcissistic.
4. **Psychological Openness.** The ability to be receptive to new and different ideas but not shut other people down.
5. **Realism.** The ability to see what can be accomplished and not gloss over problems or assume the worst.
6. **Appetite for Learning.** The ability to grow and improve know-hows and not repeat the same mistakes.

Charan reduces the concept of business leadership to essential qualities. Know-How is readable and insightful. By linking personal attributes and business success, he delivers a vital message to a society starving for true leadership.

Overall, I would rate the book a B+. It is more suited for corporate executives at very senior levels than entrepreneurs.