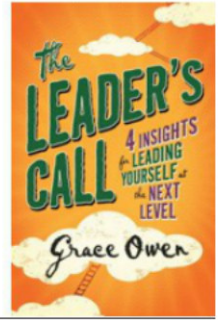


# The Leader's Call

By Grace Owen



From the outset, the writer of this book demonstrates no lack of confidence in her own abilities – she refers to her own “repertoire of leadership skills” and the “authentic leader I am today”. So as someone who claims to have “developed thousands of leaders from around the world”, we might expect this book to be wonderful.

But unfortunately, I found it to be a most confusing work, which barely relates to accepted notions of ‘leaders’ or ‘leadership development’ at all. ‘Leaders’ in the context of this book appear to be people in the process of developing their own careers, in most cases at a relatively low level or after having been made redundant or even retiring.

There were also some unintentionally amusing case studies that could hardly make claim to ‘leadership’ either. These included one that ended “despite my emailing Alanna several times, I did not hear from her again.” Another told the story of Sanjay who said: “I’ll come back to you when my diary is free.” He did not.”

Advice on developing effective leadership skills, on the other hand, appeared thin on the ground. Instead suggestions included “Consider different ideas and see which one feels right”; “Hire a mentor”, and “Apply for jobs and attend interviews”. To be fair though, even though the book is categorised as

a leadership development work, its front cover does state that its focus is on “leading yourself”.

But it did include various rather confusing elements nonetheless. In a section on ‘authenticity’ (p90), the author used the oxymoron: “I have undergone at least five brand reinventions – each one has refined my authenticity”. In the “Go-to resources for leaders” section at the back of the book under “A is for Authenticity”, there was also a reference to the “House of Colour – discover your signature colours, personal style and image”. Given the context, I found it all rather puzzling.

## The importance of self-knowledge

What this book does achieve though is to identify some of the benefits of mentoring in helping people to meet challenges or opportunities head on - what the author calls the “Leader’s Call”. Some of her observations

“What the book seems to be getting at is the importance of self-knowledge.”

such as “source positive energy for yourself” and “keep perspective” are good advice in general life terms, and some of the checklists act as a useful basis for reflection.

In fact, what the book seems to be getting at is the importance of self-knowledge. But there is no academic support for the observations made and no longer term follow-up of the case studies cited in order to illustrate how effective the author’s interventions were.

The work was instead a summary of her own approach to a particular form of mentoring. But anyone wanting to study the subject would do better to look elsewhere as there is no mention of key concepts such as active listening, neuro-linguistic programming, different learning styles, anchoring, and so on.

So while I wish the author luck in her work, I would not recommend ‘The Leader’s Call’ as a leadership development book to ensure is on your shelves. ■

Review written by Mark Northway, director and courses co-ordinator, ***Deltic Training***.

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