

I don't just read books, I devour them, with a pen in my hand, highlighting and making notes. After reading, I copy down all the notes and type them up, considering each idea all over again. Yet, I have often found that key learnings are too quickly gone from memory. That's why I started compiling these two-page book reviews for personal use. With the encouragement of friends and colleagues, I offer my notes now through the Creative Option C website so that others may gain the insight of these authors and perhaps be inspired to read the entire work.

TITLE: The One Thing You Need to Know...About Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success

AUTHOR: Marcus Buckingham, www.marcusbuckingham.com

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PRIMARY THEME: Great managing, great leading, and sustained individual success are interrelated but require different primary attributes. Great managers do not seek to tamp down the unique characteristics of their employees, but rather seek to arrange roles and responsibilities so as to use people to their greatest advantage. Great leaders, on the other hand, tap into universal needs and aspirations in order to rally followers to achieve a clearly-painted vision. Sustained personal success requires the ability to ruthlessly decline to take on tasks and responsibilities that drain us and leave us weak.

SUMMARY DISCUSSION: Building upon a career spent looking for broad truths in thousands upon thousands of interviews collected by The Gallup Organization, Buckingham has set himself the task of identifying “controlling insights” in these three areas – great managing, great leading, and sustained individual success. He’s looking for ideas that 1) apply across a wide range of situations, 2) serve to multiply other ideas, and 3) guide action. The common theme of the three controlling insights he develops in the book is that well-roundedness does not foster success. Being good at very specific things is the path to success.

CHAPTERS:

- *Chapter 1: A Few Things You Should Know about The “One Thing.”* Saying “you must learn to distinguish between what is merely important and what is imperative,” the author sets out to articulate and explain three very specific theories about success in three specific areas. Those who aspire to be their very best serve themselves well by focusing whatever talent they have for managing or leading into specific channels.
- Part One: The One Thing You Need to Know About Sustained Organizational Success*
- *Chapter 2: Managing and Leading: What's the Difference?* Great managers are focused on the needs of the people who report to them. They instinctively serve their employer by serving their employees. They are coaches, people who encourage and support others to do their best. Great leaders, on the other hand, “rally people to a better future.” They are dissatisfied with what is and hold a clear picture of something better. They are optimistic to the point of being un-dissuadable, and they have sufficient ego strength to sustain putting themselves forward as the one to make the change.
 - *Chapter 3: The One Thing You Need to Know: Great Managing.* **“Discover what is unique about each person and capitalize on it.”** Great managers have four basic skills: 1) selecting good people, 2) defining clear expectations, 3) providing praise and recognition, and 4) showing care for their people. Three things to learn about people you manage are: a) each individual’s strengths and weaknesses, b) what specifically triggers each person’s unique strengths, and c) each person’s individual learning style.

- *Chapter 4: The One Thing You Need to Know: Great Leading.* “**Discover what is universal and capitalize on it.**” Anthropologists have discovered characteristics that all human beings everywhere have in common (see below.) The greatest tool in the leader’s toolkit is clarity – getting others to see clearly how your way addresses the universal needs. Taking action provides clarity – and comfort. Actions are not ambiguous.

Part Two: The One Thing You need to Know: Sustained Individual Success

- *Chapter 5: The Twenty Percenters.* “**Discover what you don’t like doing and stop doing it.**” Gallup research indicates that 80% of Americans say they do not have a chance to do what they do best everyday. The other 20% deserve special study as role models for the rest of us. The difference is in what they choose NOT to do. To have the greatest impact over the long haul, one must have the discipline to not take on tasks that are draining, for which one does not have talent. To separate yourself from the pack, seek to hone your specific set of unique talents until you are better than others at something valuable. Stay flexible – but focus.
- *Chapter 6: The Three Main Contenders.* According to Buckingham, the One Thing theory beats out other contending theories such as 1) pick the right tactics, 2) find your flaws and fix them, and 3) cultivate your strengths. This last seems to fly in the face of Buckingham’s earlier work in the strengths method but here he emphasizes that the road to success is littered with the tasks we eradicated from our lists because we knew we were no good at them. (He develops this theme further in his 2007 book Go, Put Your Strengths to Work.)
- *Chapter 7: How Do You Sustain Success If...?* Here we have some strategies for making changes when we are bored, unfulfilled, frustrated, or drained by our work. Tips include changing jobs or roles within a job, finding ways – little by little – to integrate strengths into our daily efforts, and finding partners who enjoy the very tasks we deplore.

TOOLS: The author includes a set of interview questions to assist managers who wish to recruit for specific talents.

KEY TAKEAWAYS: “...all human anger is caused by self-righteousness...” p. 12.

“You, the leader, must be clear about whom you are choosing to serve because we, your followers, require it of you. If we are going to follow you into the future, we need to know precisely whom we are trying to please.” p. 150.

Characteristics all human beings have in common: pp. 137-141

- 1) Fear of Death - The Need for Security
- 2) Fear of the Outsider - The Need for Community
- 3) Fear of the Future – The Need for Clarity
- 4) Fear of Chaos – The Need for Authority
- 5) Fear of Insignificance – The Need for Respect

“Effective leaders don’t have to be passionate. They don’t have to be charming. They don’t have to be brilliant. They don’t have to possess the common touch. They don’t have to be great speakers. What they must be is clear... our need for clarity, when met, is the most likely to engender in us confidence, persistence, resilience, and creativity.” p. 197.

“...sustained success is caused not by what you add on, but by what you have the discipline to cut away.” p. 218.

“Every minute you invest in an activity that grates on you is a poorly-invested minute. It is a minute in which you will learn little and that will leave you weaker and less resilient for the next minute.” p. 259

“To fortify you against these pressures, and to inject a motivating dose of reality into your hopeful diversions, keep mindful of this essential principle: the longer you put up with aspects of your work you don’t like, the less successful you will be. So, as far as you are able, and as quick as you can, stop doing them, and then see what the best of you, now focused and unfettered, can achieve.” p. 279.