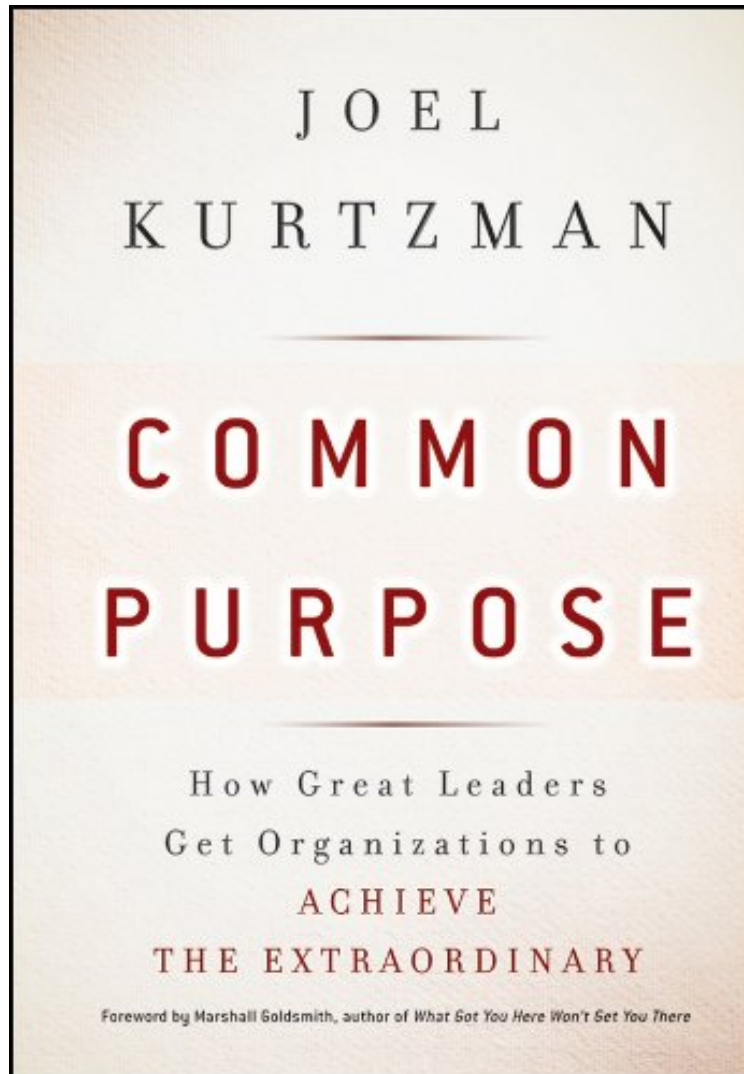


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Common Purpose: How Great Leaders Get Organizations to Achieve the Extraordinary

Joel Kurtzman

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Joel Kurtzman : Common Purpose: How Great Leaders Get Organizations to Achieve the Extraordinary

before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Common Purpose: How Great Leaders Get Organizations to Achieve the Extraordinary:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. How to Build a Superior Organization that Serves a Common Purpose By Serge J. Van Steenkiste Joel Kurtzman stresses that the heart and soul of leadership is the creation of common purpose. Leaders are judged both on who they are and what they do. Mr. Kurtzman points out repeatedly that leadership has to exist at all levels of an organization. Unsurprisingly, the author does not believe in a world divided into leaders and followers. Furthermore, Mr. Kurtzman emphasizes that true leaders have to be part of the groups they

lead, build a sense of inclusiveness, and empower their teams. This kind of leadership builds trust and positivity within teams and makes it possible for leaders to have teams that are more productive and responsive to changes in their environment. Mr. Kurtzman reminds his audience that many individuals working within a firm tend to mimic their leaders' best traits and worst characteristics. For this reason, leaders have to be mindful of the types of behavior that they do not want to see replicated. Furthermore, people often lose sight of the fact that individuals working in an organization are the ones who accomplish goals. Creating a learning organization is an important building block in a common purpose organization. Therefore, removing obstacles is a leader's full-time job. Unsurprisingly, Mr. Kurtzman stresses that when an organization is winning, everybody has to be rewarded in some ways to further foster an "esprit de corps" that is conducive to superior performance. Unfortunately, too many organizations do not practice it. Mr. Kurtzman notes repeatedly that leaders have to be comfortable with people who disagree with their ideas. Developing independent, trustworthy sources of information, judgment, and advice is key to fostering great leadership. This mindset is also an antidote to insularity and can save an organization from a calamitous fate. The author correctly observes in this regard that the ongoing economic downturn is symptomatic of bad, or even, abysmal leadership within a wide variety of private and public, for profit and non-profit organizations. In contrast, Mr. Kurtzman emphasizes on several occasions that leaders have to be ruthless in dealing with team members who seek to undermine their position, authority, or level in the organization. With this exception in mind, leaders do not have to be ruthless to lead. Mr. Kurtzman reminds his audience that kindness, caring, and empathy are powerful factors for success. Mr. Kurtzman also recommends that organizations celebrate their leaders in order to retain them. The author suggests, for instance, that leaders be given access to the team at the top, be rewarded with new challenges, not just with more money, and be notified quickly with a counteroffer if they plan to leave. When good people - leaders - leave an organization, they create gaps that can be difficult and expensive to fill. To his credit, Mr. Kurtzman pillories the exaggerated importance given to "The Art of War" by Sun Tzu in the field of leadership. Great leadership is about making organizations more responsive, flatter, better, and faster at achieving their goals. Great leadership is not about keeping the competitors in one's sight and relentlessly pushing them back. Mr. Kurtzman notes briefly that great leaders are also mindful of the differences that leaders of different generations exhibit. For this reason, it is important for organizations to stand for more than the bottom line to appeal to Gen X and Y leaders. Finally, Mr. Kurtzman rightly emphasizes that real leaders need to take in enormous amounts of information and knowledge and to process what they take in from the vantage point of view of their team and from the point of view of their organization and its mission. Thought leadership is not a luxury, but a necessity in a fast-changing world. In summary, Mr. Kurtzman does a great job in bringing to light the importance of building a superior organization that serves a common purpose. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Valuable Insights for Leaders By J. Joseph The byline for "Common Purpose" by Joel Kurtzman reads "How Great Leaders Get Organizations to Achieve the Extraordinary". The book does justice to this claim. It tells us how great leaders get organizations comprising ordinary people to do extraordinary things and achieve excellence. The crux of it is captured in the title itself - they get people to share a common purpose, in which everyone can find meaning and joy. The insights that the book gives are very valuable for leaders and aspiring leaders at all levels. It tells how the regime of command and control needs to be replaced with the culture of collaboration. Talking about 'The New Rules of Employment' in Chapter Two, Kurtzman says, "People have a need to be heard, to be respected, and to control their space. Great leaders--common purpose leaders--grant them their space, give them their trust, allow them responsibility, and present them with opportunities and resources to do their jobs. But great leaders also hold people accountable. In other words, great leaders treat the people they work with as adults, which the current employment compact supports." I think this short paragraph itself is worth a thousand pages on leadership. What more is there about great leadership? Respecting people's needs for space and freedom, trusting them as adults, ensuring that they have opportunities, resources and skills to do a great job, and holding them accountable for results. Kurtzman says, "People watch their leaders in microscopic details." That talks a great deal about the responsibility of senior leaders to model the behaviours that they want to nurture within their organizations. Only leadership teams that are characterized by collaboration and mutual respect can energize the organization and build leaders at junior levels. Kurtzman gives a number of examples of real-life leaders who model common purpose within their organizations. He also talks about 'toxic CEOs' who intimidate people and set the tone for building a 'toxic culture' within their organizations. Kurtzman says that leaders who have an excessive preoccupation with competition see other companies as rivals who have to be defeated at all costs. Such leaders lose focus on their customers and employees. A better alternative would be to think and talk all the time about how they could provide better products and services to their customers, and how they could make the work more joyful for their employees. There is never a limit to improvement, and one could think of improving over what one has achieved, or going beyond what the competition has achieved. In such a framework, competition becomes an interesting game, rather than warfare. Kurtzman tells us how stressed-out organizations fail. "The essential leadership glue of compassion, caring and authenticity gets lost in the shuffle as stressed-out people scramble over each other and confront high levels of organizational push-back to get things done. People cope, but they don't end up leading very well, and the best people depart the organization over time. In organizations like these, the talent pool gets thinned, the ideas diminish, and the organization fails." One of the great tasks of leaders is to have

an accurate sense of the type and level of stress in their organizations. Building on an idea by Michael Maccoby, Kurtzman talks about the need for bringing together the three leadership roles--strategic, operational and bridge-building roles--to create common purpose organizations. Kurtzman says, "Setting a goal (strategic leadership), making certain everything is being done that is needed to reach that goal (operational leadership), and ensuring that everyone is working together to achieve the same aims (bridge-building leadership) are essential to the success of any endeavour." This idea captures the different facets of leadership in a succinct way. It is similar to the Four Dimensional Leadership model developed by Dr. Charles J. Pellerin, the former Director of Astrophysics at NASA, and author of "How NASA Builds Teams". In Chapter Thirteen, Kurtzman describes how thought leadership matters a lot. "Common purpose begins with good ideas and carries them forward." Further he writes, "Great leaders are constantly reading, constantly replenishing their intellectual capital, constantly generating and developing new ideas." This book by Joel Kurtzman is certainly one that must be read by leaders who are serious about leading well. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding Book By RAJEEV NAIR Very good insights on how organizations should rally behind a common purpose to succeed in the competitive market. We are currently applying these techniques in our company to achieve stellar growth and reach our \$1 bn revenue mark. Mr. Kurtzman explains strategic intent in a very interesting and easy to connect fashion, with examples of real world business scenarios and people, makes the book even more exciting.

From one of the most respected names in business and leadership, a rare look at the specifics of how great leaders achieve "common purpose" and success within their organizations. What is common purpose? It is that rare, almost-palpable experience that happens when a leader coalesces a group, team or community into a creative, dynamic, brave and nearly invincible we. It happens the moment the organization's values, tools, objectives and hopes are internalized in a way that enables people to work tirelessly toward a goal. Common purpose is rarely achieved. But Kurtzman has observed that when a leader is able to bring it about, the results are outsized, measurable and inspiring. Based on Kurtzman's all-new interviews with more than 50 leaders, including Ron Sargent, Ilene Lang, Micky Arison, Simon Cooper, Joel Klein, Janet Field, Steve Wynn, Shivan Subramaniam, Michael Dell, Richard Boyatzis, Tom Kelley, Michael Milken, and Warren Bennis Contains research on leadership Kurtzman has conducted during his years at The New York Times, the Harvard Business Review, Booz Company, as well as with PricewaterhouseCoopers, Mercer, and Korn/Ferry Based on all new interviews with some of the most dynamic, successful, and enduring leaders, Common Purpose sheds new light on the meaning of leadership, the crucial qualities of leaders, and most importantly, how to lead.

.com From one of the most respected names in business and leadership, a rare look at the specifics of how great leaders achieve "common purpose" and success within their organizations. What is common purpose? It is that rare, almost-palpable experience that happens when a leader coalesces a group, team or community into a creative, dynamic, brave and nearly invincible we. It happens the moment the organization's values, tools, objectives and hopes are internalized in a way that enables people to work tirelessly toward a goal. Common purpose is rarely achieved. But Kurtzman has observed that when a leader is able to bring it about, the results are outsized, measurable and inspiring. Based on Kurtzman's all-new interviews with more than 50 leaders, including Ron Sargent, Ilene Lang, Micky Arison, Simon Cooper, Joel Klein, Janet Field, Steve Wynn, Shivan Subramaniam, Michael Dell, Richard Boyatzis, Tom Kelley, Michael Milken, and Warren Bennis Contains research on leadership Kurtzman has conducted during his years at The New York Times, the Harvard Business Review, Booz Company, as well as with PricewaterhouseCoopers, Mercer, and Korn/Ferry Based on all new interviews with some of the most dynamic, successful, and enduring leaders, Common Purpose sheds new light on the meaning of leadership, the crucial qualities of leaders, and most importantly, how to lead. Exclusive: QA with Author Joel Kurtzman Can you define common purpose? When people inside organizations don't have to be told how to do their work, when they make decisions flawlessly in the interests of their constituencies, when morale and energy are high and people are happy, when everyone does their best, and when an organization's strategy is known throughout the firm, then you can say the organization has common purpose. What inspired you to write this book? Years ago, I went to Apple's Cupertino headquarters to have a discussion with its senior leadership. Not only were people everywhere in the company upbeat and happy, but you could feel the energy snapping through the air. It was very informal; there were even bicycles in some individuals' offices; and people worked day and night. One woman told me she felt she was part of something great and thought of herself as a revolutionary. The next day, I flew to Detroit for meetings and walked into a parts manufacturing company much larger than Apple. As soon as you walked through the doors, you could see, feel, and sense the difference. The receptionist did not look up from her newspaper when I walked up to her, people's faces were downcast, the atmosphere felt lackluster, the CEO was embattled. I began wondering what was responsible for the differences between these two companies. Why was one company so depressing and another so exciting? This led me to the realization that common purpose was present at Apple and lacking at the automobile parts company. I spent years testing this hypothesis before writing the book. What are some examples of companies who have found

their common purpose and achieved greatness? Apple Computer is a common-purpose company. You can feel it and see it in their products. FM Global, a mid-sized insurance company in Rhode Island, is another common-purpose company. Everyone at FM Global speaks the same language—; in their case, the language of engineering—; and people make decisions with very little supervision. The CEO sits at a random table in the cafeteria and eats lunch with whoever is at the table. People share ideas and information. Everyone understands what the company stands for. When I was in graduate school, I spent a lot of time at NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston. It was next to our campus. People were working on designing and building the space shuttle at the time. You could feel the energy in the air and sense that the people at NASA had a mission. When people have the spirit of common purpose, they'll perform under highly adverse circumstances. Back then, at NASA, even when budgets were cut, people performed well. They knew they were doing something important. What about companies or organizations that have had failures or have missed opportunities because they weren't united? Common purpose does not happen on its own and it can be lost. When I began working with companies, my first client was Toyota. Back then, it was a common-purpose company and everyone understood the importance of quality and responsibility. Workers on the assembly line could stop the entire line if they encountered a quality problem. People put in suggestions about how to change or improve the design of a part or a manufacturing process. They worked overtime, not for extra money, but because they were interested. But over time, Toyota lost its way and its sense of common purpose. Common purpose was replaced by an overreliance on numbers and quantitative targets—; which all companies must have. But in Toyota's case, they became obsessed with numbers, especially financial numbers. The spirit of common purpose became smothered, and people who at one time acted spontaneously on behalf of the company, its interests, and customers, became fearful of taking action. The result is now obvious. Problems with certain designs went for years without being addressed and Toyota's quality and reputation were damaged, perhaps irreparably. Once common purpose leaves an organization, the organization's performance deteriorates. It takes a lot of work—; and sometimes years—; to get back the spirit of common purpose. What advice would you give leaders who are trying to unify their people? Leaders can't think of themselves as better than their workers, or more favored because they have a higher rank. Becoming CEO is not a coronation, it's a promotion. And CEOs can't do everything. The purpose of an organization is to combine the efforts of many people to produce results no one on his or her own could achieve alone. Leaders must understand that. They must live the goals they espouse. They must understand that everyone inside the organization is looking at them—; scrutinizing them, really—; and also that every action of theirs is being watched and talked about. At FM Global, Shivan Subramaniam, the chairman and CEO, decided against buying a corporate jet despite the prodding of his board. Instead, he decided to abide by the same corporate travel rules that every other executive in the company abides by. He even flies on the redeye if he must. By doing this, he sends a powerful signal throughout the company that while he may be the CEO, he's also an employee, just like everyone else. People value that. People will do almost anything for a leader like that. What can people who aren't in charge do to create common purpose? Organizations function best when people feel they aren't being second-guessed. They work at their utmost when they have internalized what the company stands for, and they use those values to make their decisions. If they sense that they are being second-guessed or being given conflicting messages, they need to communicate this to the people they work for. They need to make their supervisors understand that they take their jobs seriously, even though they rank lower than their bosses. They need to make people understand that they need to own their jobs, so to speak. And, if they are not given ownership of their jobs and allowed to make decisions that are appropriate for what they are doing, they should quit. If a person is frustrated and feels unwanted by his or her organization, the result will be a toxic workplace where people are unhappy and unproductive. If we have only one life to live, we should not spend it in a place where we are not valued or allowed to contribute fully. From Publishers Weekly: A thoughtful—; if somewhat long-winded—; and ethics-based discussion of leadership in the modern age by lauded business consultant Kurtzman. The author takes an all-for-one-and-one-for-all view of management, stating that the heart and soul of leadership is the creation of common purpose. He advocates for flat organizations and the end of the traditional corporate hierarchy in the interests of forging a sense of identity and connection between leaders and led. He cites such successes as the long-lived Proctor Gamble and the ever-lauded Apple, and failures like GM's former chairman taking the ill-advised private jet to ask Congress for a bailout as examples of how CEOs can save their companies by siding with employees—; and fail by standing apart from them. A thought-provoking look at the behavior of young Gen X and Y leaders backs up his premise that leadership is evolving—; for the better. He posits that in the years ahead, leaders will be kinder, more caring, and more empathic and are likely to create organizations superior to anything that has come before. While the material doesn't necessarily support an entire book's worth of encouragement, this is nonetheless a solid and readable look at New Leadership. (Mar.) Copyright ©; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "A thoughtful—; and ethics-based discussion on leadership in the modern age by lauded businessman Kurtzman. A solid and readable look at 'New Leadership.'" (Publishers Weekly, January 18, 2010) "Through well-told anecdotes and strong logic, Kurtzman convincingly demonstrates that the essence of leadership is the ability to forge, from a disparate group of individuals, "a creative, dynamic, brave and nearly invincible we." How does one do that?

Not by stepping out in front of the group, describing a vision, and leading the charge forward. Rather, Kurtzman's ideal leader is deep in the mix of the organization, causing its values, objectives, and approaches to be internalized by decision makers at every level." (Harvard Business , January-February 2010)