



Introduction

It's About the People— All the People

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world.

— MARGARET MEAD

We're all human" is the mantra that says it all to me. None of us are really customers, or employees, or managers, or bosses. We're people. We're human beings.

At Starbucks we're in the human service business, not the customer service business. That means the coffee has to be excellent, from the sourcing and growing to the roasting and brewing. The vision has to be inspiring and meaningful to our partners, the communities we're a part of, and all the people we serve. Our finances have to be in order so we can do the work

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we love. But without people, we have nothing. With people, we have something even bigger than coffee.

If you grow people, the people grow the business. That's it. That's the number-one priority. If your people are better human beings, they'll be better partners of the company. If you think of your customers as people, you'll make a connection with them, and they'll come back over and over again to enjoy the coffee and the experience. If you contribute meaningfully to the world around you, that caring comes back to you in kind.

My whole life, I've been driven to learn, grow, and lead. As a child I was a dreamer. I was motivated to accomplish things. Whether it was sweeping my family's grocery store, or learning the furniture business from the ground up in my brother and brother-in-law's store, or finding the best person in the furniture business to work for when I was ready for bigger challenges.

I discovered there were always people to teach me things. Out of a combination of necessity and desire, I became a student of myself and other people. I practiced what I learned—from the power of goal-setting and self-knowledge to the importance of building trust and speaking the truth. And of course I learned about successes and failures and how to handle them. And boy, did I learn from my mistakes—over and over again. I learned what worked and what didn't for me and for others. And I'm still learning.

In fact, it was only after failing at a business that I loved that I got the chance to put the leadership principles I had learned to work in an organization. At the time, my passion and ability to motivate people and build a sense of community hadn't been enough to overcome the culture of a new management and

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their overriding drive to boost profits at the expense of their people. I searched for a place where I'd flourish.

As it so happened, I often found myself sitting in the Bellevue Starbucks, just outside of Seattle, pondering my next move. But always a retailer at heart, as I sat there planning a possible new retail venture, I was making mental notes about the Starbucks store I was sitting in—*Don't get too slick. Good texture. Need more chairs.*

Just as I was about to finalize the papers to start my own business, a goal I had pursued and delayed several times, the stars aligned, and I signed on at Starbucks, in 1989, at the age of forty-four. My dreams and the Starbucks dream turned out to be a match made in heaven. We lived, breathed, and taught the principles of a people-centered organization. We put our philosophy into action and to the test every day.

As my path became clearer and as our drive to create a people-centered organization took hold, I worked more intensely to share what I knew with the people I worked with and lived alongside every day. I cajoled, pushed, confronted, and cared. I reached out beyond the office and conference rooms with phone calls and visits to stores. I spoke at gatherings large and small to share what I learned and to inspire others.

Wherever I am, I still visit as many Starbucks stores as I can each week. I've discovered that my hunger for wisdom about the human dimensions of leadership and building a successful organization has only grown throughout the years and has reached far beyond the walls of Starbucks.

I also know from firsthand experience that there's a large gap between the wisdom of knowing what's right and the wisdom to do what's right. The principles I've learned and

taught sound simple because they are based on basic human truths. But putting them into practice is hard because it is human nature to avoid the truth, both with ourselves and with others.

Your part is to discover *your* truth. When you do so, you tap into your passion, unexplored strengths, and individual gaps so you can grow, lead, and achieve your goals and find your potential for personal and organizational success.

Ten Principles of Personal Leadership

At Starbucks there's a little green booklet, called *The Green Apron Book*, which sets down the guiding principles for all the people who work at the company.

It's a simple book, barely a booklet, but no one ever complains about its simplicity. The guidelines are merely reminders of what we stand for in our Starbucks stores—what we *can* do, not what we must or can't do.

As we grew from a small to a much larger group of committed individuals, *The Green Apron Book* was a way to capture and write down the things that mattered to us about our mission and the kind of company we were creating. In the same spirit, the principles of personal leadership I've learned and taught and present in this book are principles that *everyone* can embrace. I've used them as touchstones to keep me honest and to keep me clear.

They've also withstood the test kitchen of my leadership at Starbucks. The principles are literally brewed into the way we work, make decisions, confront problems, care about one another, persevere, and create opportunities for our future. This

book, these principles, are trusted markers that can set your course in the turbulent sea of business, commerce, and life.

I've used these principles as I've coached hundreds of leaders at every level. Not every principle will be equally meaningful to you or equally challenging for you to remember and practice. But I can guarantee you that you won't go wrong if you use these ten principles as a guiding force in leading yourself and, if it's your goal, in leading others.

1. KNOW WHO YOU ARE: *Wear One Hat*

Our success is directly related to our clarity and honesty about who we are, who we're *not*, where we want to go, and how we're going to get there. When organizations are clear about their values, purpose, and goals, they find the energy and passion to do great things.

2. KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE: *Do It Because It's Right, Not Because It's Right for Your Résumé*

The path to success comes from doing things for the right reasons. You can't succeed if you don't know what you're trying to accomplish and without everyone being aligned with the goal. Look for purpose and passion in yourself and the people you lead. If they're not there, do something.

3. THINK INDEPENDENTLY: *The Person Who Sweeps the Floor Should Choose the Broom*

People are not "assets," they are human beings who have the capacity to achieve results beyond what is thought possible. We need to get rid of rules—real and imagined—and encourage the independent thinking of others and ourselves.

4. BUILD TRUST: *Care, Like You Really Mean It*
Caring is not a sign of weakness but rather a sign of strength, and it can't be faked—within an organization, with the people we serve, or in our local or global communities. Without trust and caring, we'll never know what could have been possible. Without freedom from fear, we can't dream, and we can't reach our potential.

5. LISTEN FOR THE TRUTH: *The Walls Talk*
Put the time into listening, even to what's not said, and amazing results will follow. You'll know what your customers want, you'll know why the passion is missing from your organization, and you'll learn solutions to problems that have been sitting there waiting to be picked.

6. BE ACCOUNTABLE: *Only the Truth Sounds Like the Truth*
No secrets, no lies of omission, no hedging and dodging. Take responsibility and say what needs to be said, with care and respect.

7. TAKE ACTION: *Think Like a Person of Action, and Act Like a Person of Thought*
Find the sweet spot of passion, purpose, and persistence. "It's all about the people" isn't an idea, it's an action. Feel, do, think. Find the balance, but act.

8. FACE CHALLENGE: *We Are Human Beings First*
Use all the principles to guide you during the hardest times. If the challenge is too big, if you find yourself stuck, take

smaller bites. But remember to put people first, and you'll find the guidance you need.

9. PRACTICE LEADERSHIP: *The Big Noise and the Still, Small Voice*

Leading can be the noisy "I'm here!" kind of thing. But don't ever forget that leaders are just ordinary human beings. Don't let the noise crowd out the truth. Listen to your still, small voice. Let quiet be your guide.

10. DARE TO DREAM: *Say Yes, the Most Powerful Word in the World*

Big dreams mean big goals, big hopes, big joys. Say yes, and enjoy all that you are doing, and help others to do the same.

Valuable Reminders

As people who traveled through my office over the years know, my way of reminding myself about this journey of true self and purpose was to put words of wisdom, which I used as guardrails for my journey, on my walls.

When I heard a piece of advice, read something that struck me as a blinding flash of insight, I wrote it down, used it as a reference point, and quoted its lessons as I taught and mentored others. These weren't quotes that became slogans in company hallways and restrooms. These were sometimes direct and sometimes enigmatic words of wisdom that became a launching pad for many positive and difficult conversations I had with people and became part of the institutional memory for the people who make up the culture of Starbucks.

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Over time, I framed and hung many of these quotes, and other people began to add to what is now an extensive collection of black frames by giving me quotes that are important to them or, they think, relevant to me.

This collection is really a map of my life. The quotes represent my education. I learned from the wisdom of the ages, from mentors, and from experiences. Making these lessons permanent and putting them where I could see them every day reinforced what was important to me. It's not so different from going to a church or a mosque or a temple—we need to be reminded of what is important, of the lessons we've learned, and of the things that guide how we work and how we live our lives.

The lessons—and the difficult, joyful, challenging, emotional conversations often begun in my office beneath the frames—have been remembered, embraced, and passed on by Starbucks people around the globe.

It's my belief that we need these lessons more than ever, and they need to be shared as widely as possible. The time has passed when leaders and followers, bosses and employees, have distinct roles with distinct requirements. We are all people. We're all human beings.

As work becomes less hierarchical, as our world economy becomes more and more about relationships and connecting, I believe the principles of personal leadership are more important than ever. Although leading others is an honor, it begins with an obligation.

It brings an obligation, first, to continually develop your self and, second, to help develop leaders—not only leaders with a capital *L*, those with official titles and organizational

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responsibilities, but also leaders with a small *l*, who are all of us. We're all responsible for leading ourselves to realize our potential and to make the greatest possible contribution to work and the world around us.

However, here's the irony—and an invitation. At its most basic, "It's all about the people" has always meant it's *not* about *me*. It's about *us* and what we can do together. These principles and this book are about you and us, all of us in the game of work and life. What you can do in your job, your career, your life, what we can all do together is more than most of us can imagine. If we know who we are, know where we're going, and go there with a spirit of human service, the entire journey becomes far less daunting and far more fulfilling.