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# A Book Review: The Ten Golden Rules of Leadership

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**A Book Review: The Ten Golden Rules of Leadership**

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**Holly Moore**

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### Summary

In The Ten Golden Rules of Leadership: Classical Wisdom for Modern Leaders, authors Panos Mourdoukoutas and M.A. Soupios present a different approach to leadership. The authors take a back to basics approach with this book, segmenting leadership into ten main points derived from ten quotes from philosophers (or leaders) of ancient times. These quotes (or philosophies) are then further examined and applied to the meaning of leadership (as the author's interpret them), resulting in *The Ten Golden Rules of Leadership*.

As the title suggests, this book focuses on a classical approach to leadership. Classical in the way that it does not go out of style, lose its meaning or application over time. For the nature of this review, three of the ten golden rules will be evaluated and discussed: (1) "Know thyself" from Thales, (2) "Nurture community in the workplace" from Plato and (3) "Live life by a higher code" from Aristotle. In accordance with know thyself, one must aim to fulfill the knowledge of one's self. They must possess a wealth of strong character traits and welcome, embrace and accept both positive and negative criticism. One whom nurture's community in the workplace, is one who embrace's the greater good and understands that the greatest good can only result from a wealth that is shared within the community. Live life by a higher code involves the practice of living one's life according to strict moral and ethical guidelines. It requires leaders to hold themselves to a higher standard and in turn their subordinate's will hold their leaders in a higher regard and place a higher value on their relationship with their organization.

The main purpose of this book is to educate readers on what makes a leader. However, there is another lesson to be learned. As readers, we are reminded that even in this modern day

of technological advances, some of the answers we seek require us to revisit the past. Sometimes a common sense answer satisfies even the most difficult question: a question that has been asked for thousands of years. *What is a leader?* The authors differentiate between so-called leaders and real leaders, showcasing the desirable traits real leaders are made of. In essence, the core messages illustrated in the text, originated from philosophical teachings that can be applied to all walks of life, whether you are the leader of a major corporation, the leader of a Cub Scout troop or simply leading your own personal life and managing relationships.

In summary, I found one statement in particular very powerful and I feel it best encapsulates the text. “The character of an organization’s leadership determines a company’s destiny.” (Mourdoukoutas & Soupios, 2015, p. 124)

### **Evaluation**

#### **From Thales: Know thyself.**

The first of ten golden rules presented in this text, comes from Thales and it is “Know thyself”. The authors suggest that a true leader is on a constant thirst for knowledge. This quest for knowledge is of oneself. Leadership requires a particular skill set, which can not necessarily be taught, but comes from within. Real leadership, the idea of it, at its core, incorporates the entire human being: mind, body, heart and soul.

A true leader should always be in touch with their personal abilities and the limitations of such. They fully embrace both their strengths and weaknesses. A true leader is functioning at a mental capacity that is continuously seeking improvement. They go through this internal process of checking and balancing their thoughts, behaviors and actions. They are truly in tune with their

inner motivations and are consistently analyzing themselves, on a path seeking personal betterment. However, this journey is not a selfish one, nor is it self-seeking.

The path to constant self-improvement and self-betterment are not necessarily because of self-interest. Contrary, they are a product that comes with knowing oneself wholly and using that information to make decisions that welcome the truth, however unpopular it may seem, because they understand the road to truly knowing oneself is also admitting ones failures, taking responsibility for them and improving their impact in the future. The very essence of leadership encompasses a human beings true character, motives and actions. The ideal candidate for a leader is endowed with a strong sense of self, a high level of integrity and the hunger to serve others.

**From Plato: Nurture community in the workplace.**

The third golden rule presented in this text, comes from Plato and it is: “Nurture community in the workplace.” The authors state with conviction that true leaders cannot be produced. True leaders do not exist because they are wrapped in outlandish facades. Rather, they exist because of a strong inner character that embodies them. A true leader is one who steps out from behind the shadows and unmask him or herself and wins the respect of the community. Thus, we can conjure there is no leader, without the support of the community.

*What constitutes leadership?* We know that one key ingredient is a real leader; another ingredient is followers. *How do leaders promote followers?* The modest approach is practice what you preach, gain trust and facilitate cooperation among community members. Any leader can deliver a promising speech and win over the hearts of the community, but if the leader fails to act according to what is presented, failure will result. When applied to the business

environment failure can have catastrophic results, such as the disintegration of an organization. It takes a real leader, acting with integrity to win the trust and loyalty of the community through hard work and dedication.

There is great difficulty in designing a community that not only works together, but flourishes in success together for the betterment of the whole. Following the correct recipe for leadership, one can create an environment that supports the idea: *there is no "I" in team*. The author's reference putting the *we before I*.

The leaders' journey is born out of their inner drive to make the environment better for the community. Leaders pave the way for others and find success in making improvements for the greater good. The authors suggest the truest testament of one's character is the ability to value others before oneself. A true leader cultivates a workplace where group dynamics can thrive, vision is provided and guidance is given. A true leader empowers his or her subordinates with the tools to succeed and does not hold onto such titles or accomplishments for themselves. Rather than exploiting individual success, real leaders promote the camaraderie that leads to it. They concentrate on the road that led to the success, which is to be shared by all who were a part of it.

True leadership is like a work of art. For a leader, the art is in the knowing who they are, what they represent, what they are capable of accomplishing and knowing that they are a part of something much bigger than themselves.

**From Aristotle: Live life by a higher code.**

The seventh golden rule presented in this text, comes from Aristotle and it is: “Live life by a higher code.” The cultivation of a leader and in part the human spirit is an enlightened journey with the ability to successfully employ a variety of tools, such as self-evaluation, self-monitoring and self-discipline. This is not an ordinary task. Rather, it is comprised of challenges, which could potentially be self-defeating if you are not made of strong moral fiber. Living life by a higher code is, essentially following an internally driven compass.

A real leader’s compass will always deliver them to a path seeking truth, not a path seeking self-gratification to be had by him or her. They are humble beings and live an honest life. A true leader has a deep understanding that ones’ decisions and actions far surpass their own reach. They embrace the fact that they are indeed a part of something greater than themselves and they have a responsibility to the organization. True leaders hold themselves to a higher standard and expect the organization to hold them to a higher standard as well.

What the authors do not explicitly state in this book is that a real leader is wise. The road to wisdom can be a lengthy one, requiring constant hard work in the intellectual, emotional and physical domains. In short, the development of a leader is anything but and it assumes a great amount of dedication. The modern generation falls short on the tall list the authors depict as the recipe for a real leader. Today, the primary focus is immediate gratification. A true leader would resist such temptation, take the road less traveled and leave a trail for others to follow.

### **Conclusion**

The “ten golden rules” illustrated in this book have the potential to offer multiple meanings to multiple applications. One strong argument that can be raised against Mourdoukoutas and Soupios is that the true nature of the meaning behind these philosopher’s

quotes are unknown to us. The interpretation of these philosophical works are open to critical examination and therefore, the text which is portrayed by the author's in this book may or may not be an accurate representation to the true intent of their original creators.

In my opinion, I do not believe the authors stretched the true meaning the original authors intended. I believe the author's succeed in orchestrating the idea that real leadership comes from within. The author's convey a deeper meaning to leadership, one carved from ancient philosophers' works with a practical methodology to modern business. The thought of learning from the world's greatest thinkers, who have long passed us by is powerful. I appreciate that the authors brought these greats back to life and used their philosophies in the application of modern business. I enjoyed this book and would recommend it to any "modern thinker" who has an appreciation for forgotten treasures. This book serves as a reminder of what is truly important, in leadership and in life.



**References**

Mourdoukoutas, Panos & Soupios, M.A. (2015). *The Ten Golden Rules of Leadership: Classical Wisdom for Modern Leaders*. New York, NY: American Management Association.