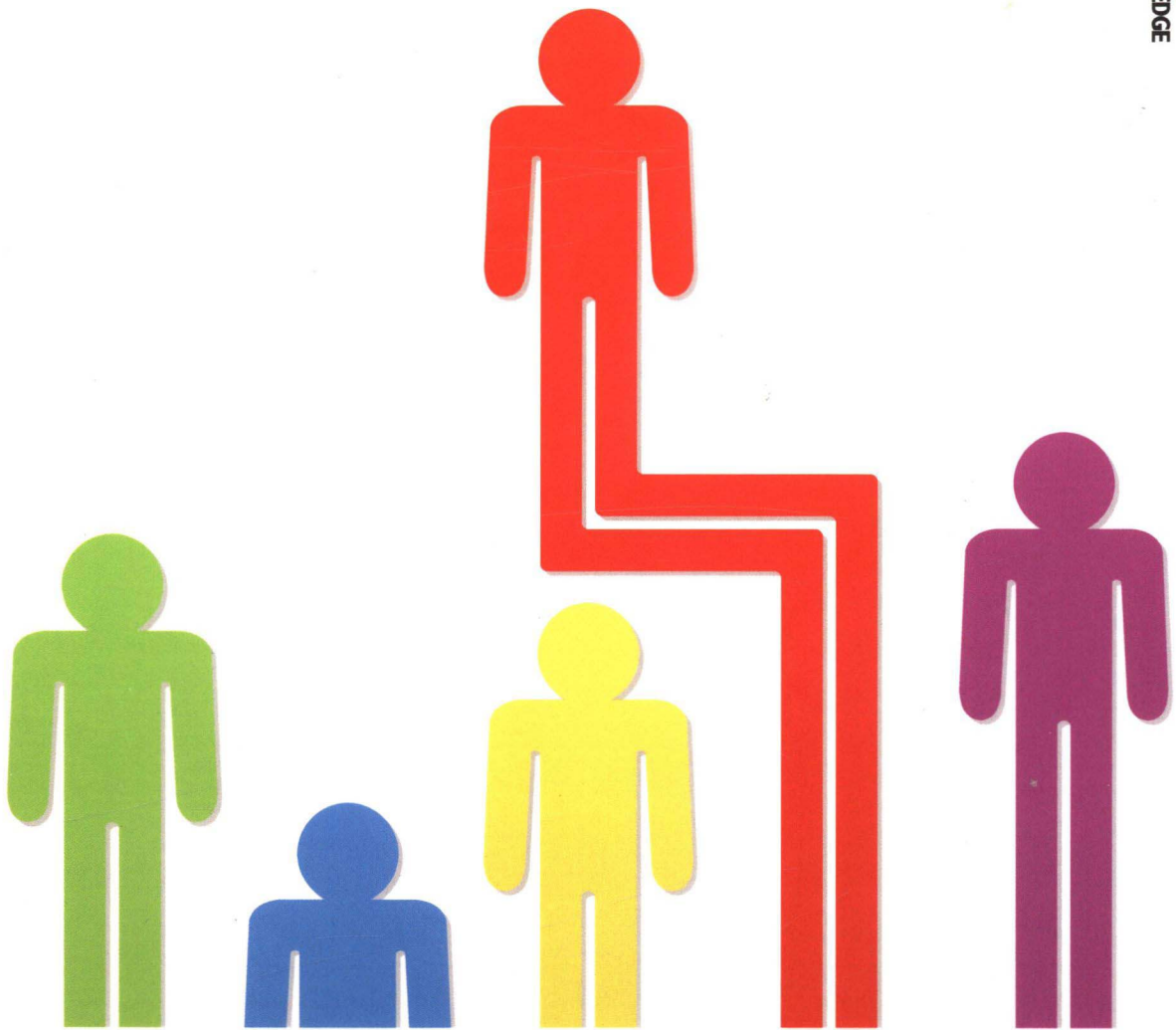


Third Edition



# **Leadership in Public Organizations**

**An Introduction**

**Montgomery Van Wart**



"I have used the second edition of this book in my course on public managers and leadership; however, this edition is even better. The implications for leadership in a public or nonprofit context are well illustrated, and the included leadership assessment instrument is very helpful for students doing assignments and relevant for practitioners who want to improve their leadership skills."

*Prof. Dr. Bram Steijn, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands*

"Many public and nonprofit managers believe that they know leadership 'when they see it.' They are wrong. As Van Wart argues, the chemistry of leadership is often oversimplified. Instead, he offers a very thorough—and very readable—analysis of successful leadership, written to unusual depth. As a basis for self-study, experiential learning or formal training, *Leadership in Public Organizations, 3e* is a necessary volume in any aspiring leader's library, an indispensable tool in their public or nonprofit toolbox, and an essential link in their organization's chain of success."

*Marc Holzer, Rutgers University -Newark, USA*

Now in a completely revised and updated Third Edition, *Leadership in Public Organizations* provides a compact but complete analysis of leadership for students and practitioners who work in public and nonprofit organizations. Offering a comprehensive review of leadership theories in the field, from the classic to the cutting-edge, and how they relate specifically to the public sector context, this textbook covers the major competency clusters in detail, supported by research findings as well as practical guidelines for improvement. These competencies are graphically portrayed in a leadership action cycle that aids readers in visually connecting theory and practice. Including questions for discussion and analysis and hypothetical scenarios for each chapter, as well as an easily reproducible leadership assessment instrument students may use to apply the theories they've learned, this Third Edition also explores:

- The rise of e-leadership, or the relationship between leadership and information and communication technologies, as well as the role leaders play in selecting those technologies
- The challenges of nonprofit management leadership, including an extensive case study designed to illustrate the differences between public and nonprofit sector leadership curricula
- Separate, dedicated chapters on charismatic and transformational leadership; distributed leadership; ethics-based leadership; and power, world cultures, diversity, gender, complexity, social change, and strategy.

*Leadership in Public Organizations* is an essential core text designed specifically with upper-level and graduate Public Administration courses on leadership in mind, but it has also proven an indispensable guidebook for professionals seeking insight into the role of successful leadership behavior in the public sector. It can further be used as supplementary reading in introductory courses examining management competencies, in leadership classes to provide practical self-help and improvement models, and in Organizational Theory classes that wish to balance organizational perspectives with individual development.

**Montgomery Van Wart** is Professor in the Department of Public Administration at California State University, San Bernardino.

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Edition

# Leadership in Public Organizations

Montgomery Van Wart

OXFORD

# Leadership in Public Organizations

An Introduction

THIRD EDITION

**Montgomery Van Wart**

**With Paul Suino**

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**Montgomery Van Wart** is Professor in the Department of Public Administration at California State University, San Bernardino.

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# About the Author

Montgomery Van Wart is a Professor in the Department of Public Administration at California State University, San Bernardino. He is currently an honorary professor at the University of Hong Kong, and has been a Visiting Professor at Rutgers and KU Leuven. He has worked in higher education in various capacities for thirty years, nearly always in an administrative role. He has over 100 publications. Some of his other books include *Dynamics of Leadership in Public Service* (Second Edition), *Leadership Across the Globe* (with Gupta), and *Leadership and Culture: Comparative Models of Top Civil Servant Training* (with Hondeghem and Schwella). He has done extensive training of leaders at all levels of government around the world.



# Preface to the Third Edition

*Leadership in Public Organizations* addresses the need for a compact but nonetheless complete analysis of leadership for students and practitioners who work in public and nonprofit organizations.

The first half of *Leadership in Public Organizations* addresses the basic issues and theories related to leadership; the second half looks at leadership as a cycle of action requiring an array of competencies. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the leadership literature, focusing on issues related to the public sector administrative context. Chapter 2 discusses how to examine leadership theories comparatively and examines the ten styles used in leadership theories, although under a variety of names. Chapter 3 examines the foundation of leadership studies by examining the early classical management and trait theories, as well as a sample of prominent transactional theories. Chapter 4 compares charismatic and transformational theories of leadership. Chapter 5 reviews leadership when it is distributed more broadly, such as with informal leaders and teams. Chapter 6 focuses on the relationship of ethics and leadership. Chapter 7 covers the topics of power, world cultures, diversity, gender, complexity, social change, and strategy. Chapter 8 focuses exclusively on competency approaches in order to prepare readers for the competency framework that organizes Part II of the book.

The applied model used in the second half of the book is called the leadership action cycle. Readers, instructors, and trainers can easily reverse the order for various purposes (essentially starting with the competencies of leadership in Chapter 9). The book features one or two substantial hypothetical scenarios at the end of every chapter (except the last chapter, which contains a historical case study), along with questions for discussion and analysis. The book also features a leadership assessment instrument (Appendix A) that is in the public domain so that it can be freely copied and used. Because the assessment instrument is modeled on the book, debriefing and development based on the instrument are relatively easy. The use of the assessment instrument by students in writing original papers about leaders has been extraordinary. When I ask students to produce an analytical paper on an actual leader they know, they can supplement their

interview with a data-rich self-assessment by the leader, and use assessments by subordinates and colleagues.

In this third edition not only is the text updated, but it includes more references to e-leadership—that is, leadership mediated by information and communication technologies, as well as the roles leaders play in selecting them. Another important addition to the text is an extensive nonprofit management leadership example in Chapter 8 that discusses the modest but very significant differences in public and nonprofit sector curricula in leadership.

The academic audience for this book is upper-division college students and general master's-level students. *Leadership in Public Organizations* is primarily designed as the principal text for classes on leadership, but it may be used as an auxiliary text in introductory classes in which a competency review is desired, in Management classes to provide a practical self-help guide to improvement, and in Organizational Theory classes balancing organizational perspectives with a text focusing on individual development.

Trainers should find the text particularly attractive because of the versatility of the public-domain leadership assessment instrument and the matching “guidelines for improvement” incorporated in the discussion for each competency. Instructions for the assessment instrument are provided in Appendix B. Instructors should note that the very substantial scenario in Chapter 8 is intended not only as an analytical exercise illustrating integrated leadership theories, but also as an opportunity to demonstrate the instrument used in this book—Assessment of Organizational Conditions and Leader Performance.

I hope that you find this third edition of *Leadership in Public Organizations* a useful text and reference, and I encourage instructors to contact me if they have questions regarding the text or suggestions for the next edition.

Monty Van Wart  
Riverside, California



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# *Introduction*

Although the serious study of leadership is only about a hundred years old, interest in leaders and leadership dates back thousands of years. In addition to the enormous power that leaders have had over their people—literally life and death—leaders often attained godlike status themselves.

Despite modern efforts to curb excessive powers of all leaders—political, financial, religious, and so on—many leaders around the world continue to wield incredible amounts of power. In countries where democratic institutions are weak, political leaders may be as powerful as they were in ancient times. Nor should one think that leaders in wealthy democratic states have been emasculated of their power; they simply must use it more deftly. In the United States, presidents still send troops into battle without declarations of war and governors spare the lives of those on Death Row. Billionaires like Sam Walton changed the face of rural commerce, forcing tens of thousands of country businesses to reinvent themselves or go out of business, while Bill Gates dominated the world of computers as powerfully as Charlemagne ruled Europe. The rise of religious activism around the world has allowed the Dalai Lama to become a political force and icon even outside his own followers, evangelical leaders in the United States to increasingly affect social policy, and ayatollahs in Iran to largely direct the affairs of the country. One determined “leader,” Osama bin Laden, was able to simultaneously destroy the largest buildings in the world and damage the Pentagon, bringing the United States to an unprecedented standstill. He successfully encouraged hundreds of his followers to sacrifice their lives for the glory of their cause in suicide bombings. While considered a demonic mass murderer in the United States, in most Arab countries, he gained grudging admiration even among political moderates for his ability to project such a powerful anti-American statement which ultimately led to the founding of a new caliphate in the Middle East. Given the tremendous impact and divergent personalities of leaders around the world, it is nearly impossible to read, watch, or listen to any news source and not be inundated with issues related to leadership, just as the topic is enormously common in the stories and topics relayed in entertainment.

Ultimately, then, there are two major reasons for the enduring human interest in the topic of leadership. First, the effect of leaders on our lives is omnipresent. Leaders affect us on a grand scale in that they determine the success or failure of our societies, countries, and localities. Hitler destroyed Germany, while Churchill saved Great Britain. The leaders of the accounting firm of Arthur Andersen destroyed a highly successful company with their unwise profiteering, while CEO Lee Iacocca saved Chrysler from economic implosion. Social leaders as disparate as Jerry Falwell (the evangelical Christian movement), Ralph Nader (the environmental movement), Gloria Steinem (the women's movement), Sarah Palin (the conservative movement), and Jesse Jackson (the minority rights movement) fight for, or against, our most deeply held convictions. In China, Mao Zedong used his political position to reshape the social landscape, and more recently Liu Xiaobo, the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner, has agitated for greater democracy in a country whose communist system is now allowing enormous disparities of wealth. Leaders affect us just as much in our daily settings. A bad supervisor sends us scurrying for a new job. A good team leader makes a difficult assignment seem easy because of good organization and encouragement. The personal problems and lack of discipline of a father cause him to be a bad role model for his children. Second, we are compulsively fascinated by people in leadership positions, or those who assume the roles of leaders. No matter whether the leader is a spiritual saint like Joan of Arc or a demonic despot like Joseph Stalin, a great success like the Duke of Wellington, who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, or a flawed ruler like the mythical Oedipus, we are equally mesmerized.

There are several reasons for the importance of leadership in our current study. Since leaders affect us so profoundly on a grand as well as a personal scale, it is important to understand how leadership functions. We should be able to recognize the types of leaders we have in terms of their strengths and deficiencies, and also assess the types of leaders we need and the particular competencies they should possess. Another important reason for studying leadership is that all of us function as leaders from time to time. To achieve professional success, managers need to be good leaders, and the study of leadership can help all of us be at least marginally better—and in some cases it can have a dramatic impact. Indeed, because of the complexity of leadership and the myriad situations in which leaders find themselves, the study of leadership cannot help but improve the rate and degree of success. It is true that great leaders often start with great talents, but these abilities rarely find expression without study, mentoring, and practice. It is an explicit purpose of this book to help readers become both better analysts of leadership and better practitioners in organizational settings.

Because leadership is such a large subject, we next distinguish among the major types of leadership and identify the type of leadership on which this book focuses.

## MAJOR TYPES OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is such a broadly used concept that it can be ambiguous if not defined more narrowly. One way to define types of leadership is by the kind of “followers” being led, and another is by the nature of the work that is the primary focus of the leader. Some leaders spend most of their time with followers over whom they have authority, such as employees; other leaders primarily represent their followers, such as constituents (e.g., voters); and still others do not have authority over or direct authority from followers, but nonetheless have intellectual sway over adherents as role models, based on the leader’s creativity or ideological clarity. Additionally, the work of leaders can vary in fundamentally different ways. Some people are leaders because they are in charge of getting things done (execution); others are leaders because they are in charge of determining policies; and still others are leaders because they come up with new ideas or well-expressed ideologies that others emulate or admire. In mature organizations and systems, these roles are often quite distinct, but in some special cases, such as new entrepreneurial organizations, the roles are merged, as was seen in the case of Steve Jobs at Apple and Mark Zuckerberg at Facebook. The impact of strong initial leaders can be profound in the public sector too, when they are able to bridge multiple functions, such as the lasting influence of the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, and the first major head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), J. Edgar Hoover.

The main focus of this book is organizational leaders who have a primary or sole focus on employees. The best examples of organizational leaders who focus on execution and implementation are managers. Managers have programs to run, projects to complete, and deadlines to meet. Organizational leaders who focus on the policies that their employees execute and are empowered either to make exceptions or to recommend policy changes to legislative bodies are either management executives or political executives. For example, a city manager routinely provides policy alternatives to the city council, and a strong mayor (one who acts as the chief executive officer) still hires and fires department heads in addition to their role as policy leader. The organizational leader focused on new ideas is a transformational leader who could be found at any level in the organization where the planned change efforts are being attempted.

Leadership also occurs outside organizational settings, relying primarily on paid employees. Many leaders hold their formal or informal positions by satisfying constituents. The ability to reward and punish is usually negligible, but they do rely on their position, expertise, and personal popularity. Such leaders who are interested in getting things done generally have volunteers rather than employees; community leaders such as those in charge of the local PTA or a volunteer community project director function in this way. Legislators are an example of leaders who have constituents and focus on

policy, as are advisory board members. Lobbyists and policy entrepreneurs represent constituents and bring new ideas to legislators and executives.

Finally, some leaders have neither much formal power stemming from a formal position nor the ability to reward or punish; nonetheless, they have a powerful influence on others. Such leaders rely primarily on their expertise or force of personality alone. A small group of people who are thrown together for the first time and yet must get a project done quickly will find that one or two people will emerge as leaders. On a broader scale, some leaders without organizations actively encourage specific social change (policy change) by some combination of reason, passion, and personality. Think of the influence of Mahatma Gandhi (nonviolent resistance), Ralph Nader (consumer protection), or Rachel Carson (author of *The Silent Spring* and a philosophical founder of the clean water environmental movement). Finally, some leaders focus on the newness of ideas rather than working on specific policies that might need to be changed; examples in this category include philosophical zealots (e.g., historical figures such as St. Francis of Assisi, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx) and social trend setters (e.g., Jacqueline Kennedy in fashion or the Beatles in musical tastes in the 1960s). Exhibit 1.1 identifies these different types of leaders.

EXHIBIT 1.1				
A Simplified View of Different Types of Leaders				
Types of followers	Types of work			
		Execution	Policy	New ideas
	Employees	Managers	Executives with policy responsibilities	Transformational leaders
	Constituents	Community leaders of volunteer groups	Legislators and advisory board members	Lobbyists and policy entrepreneurs
	Adherents	Small-group leaders	Leaders of social movements	Philosophical zealots and social trend setters

Of course, leaders often cross these conceptual distinctions because they carry out several types of leadership simultaneously or change their leadership roles over time. Political executives who may emphasize employees or constituents depending on their preferences and background are an excellent example of dual leadership types. Presidents and governors are both the putative heads of enormous organizations and, at the same time, recommend legislative initiatives and enact laws by signing them.