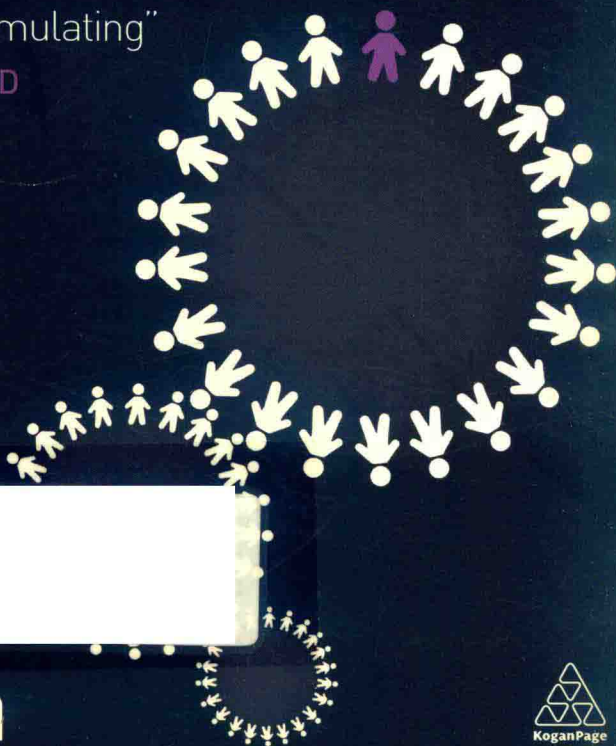


The Responsible Leader

DEVELOPING A
CULTURE OF RESPONSIBILITY
IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

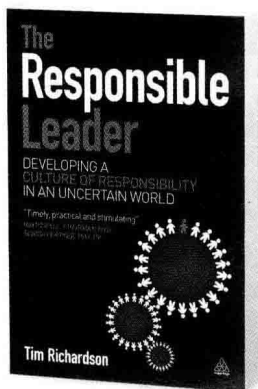
"Timely, practical and stimulating"

IAN POWELL, CHAIRMAN AND
SENIOR PARTNER, PwC UK



书馆

Richardson



The Responsible Leader

Developing
a culture of
responsibility
in an uncertain
world

Tim Richardson



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The Responsible Leader

FOREWORD

‘The responsible leader’ is exemplified by the author himself, whom I first met several years ago when he was a young and highly talented Director of Leadership Development at PwC. While Tim was helping shape fresh thinking within that organization, it became clear that his lateral and in-depth thinking could be equally useful serving a wider audience.

At the time, in the days leading up to the global financial crisis of 2008, Tim had spotted what was really going on, noticing both the symptoms and the causes of a potential malaise. He felt called to be something of a prophet in the wilderness.

His work since then, across the sectors and allied to his writings, has been helpful to all those endeavouring to make sense of their personal and working lives in increasingly challenging and demanding days.

Using a series of well-chosen case studies and personal experiences, Tim delineates not only how readily the alert responsible leader can detect shortcomings in a team or organization but also how vital and enriching a personal example of courageous authentic leadership, in life as in work, can be.

The progressive chapters of *The Responsible Leader* draw the reader inwards, towards self-examination, and then outwards and onwards towards practical suggestions as to how best to prepare oneself for demanding yet exciting lives of responsible leadership in the corporate or not-for-profit sectors or in the best of cases both.

In this way the responsible leader will be happy to raise the bar, to set standards and on occasions to stand alone not least in those knee-knocking moments of personal courage and decision-making.

Indeed through his own working life and experience, Tim has seen a whole host of managers doing things right but fewer genuine leaders who do the right thing. This book is a personal and at times almost spiritual call to the colours of being who you are as a responsible leader in recognising that everyone in your team or organization is, after all, someone else’s child and as such warrants respect.

One can almost hear Tim speak as he writes – perhaps this is one of his greatest gifts – all the while encouraging us to be all that we can be and to see what a difference our lives of responsible leadership can and will make to all those in our charge and care.

Real lasting change happens one on one, one by one and then in partnerships. Facing this is ultimately both the task and the privilege of the responsible leader the foundation of whose life and leadership, as Tim portrays it, is grounded in the unselfish service of others. In times such as these, this is a message that will prove difficult for many to embrace but is surely needed.

*Professor Norman Drummond CBE FRSE
Founder and Chairman
Columba 1400 and Drummond International*

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Introduction

This is a book about ego, greed, betrayal, redemption and hopefulness. Ingredients, one might think, for a novel, but in this case the characters are real and the storylines are genuine. It is also a book about you and me, and the part we play in our own unique contexts. I do not want this book to be an exercise in talking 'about' leadership. That is easy and requires little investment on our part. Rather, I want to encourage each of us as players to pause and consider our response, first to the overarching question 'How can we lead responsibly and re-engage people's trust and respect as leaders?' and thereafter to a number of supplementary questions.

My intention in writing this book is first to raise your awareness of and attention to leaders and leadership as we experience them today. Secondly, I want to provoke challenge to our established thinking before offering some practical responses that individuals and organizations can take to evolve and be aligned with wider expectations of leadership in our fast-changing world.

As someone who has spent the past 25 years working with people and businesses – large and small, local and international – to help them grow and be effective, I am not interested in a purely academic text as I recognize in myself a fundamental drive to make a difference and see insights applied to real situations. Therefore this book is a blend – a helpful one, I hope – of theoretical positions and application ideas, often presented in the form of questions to prompt thinking. I have also highlighted throughout some case studies and examples that I believe illustrate the key points. That said, these examples are not all drawn from big business, as you might imagine. Given where we are with leadership (which we will explore shortly), it seems to me that we may need to look further afield for positive examples and role models. Indeed, this is itself one hallmark of responsible leadership, the willingness and ability to see beyond the obvious. But more of that later.

Flow of this book

In Chapter 1, I set out where we are currently and offer a challenge to notice and question what we can and should be observing about leaders and leadership. It is an opening statement of my and many others' view about what is right and, probably more importantly, what is wrong just now. I also want to set out what I believe are some dramatic forces that are at work in our world at the moment and that have an inevitable impact on how individuals can and should lead themselves and their organizations.

In Part 1, I will seek to set out a different paradigm for the future – the case for responsible leadership – and what this means for individuals and organizations. We will explore what distinguishes responsible leaders – the mindsets needed, which in turn shape behaviours – while acknowledging the dilemmas presented if we choose to go this way. We will also present a simple systemic model representing responsible leadership in action.

In Part 2, I will focus on how businesses and other organizations can and do go about developing a culture of responsibility and how this translates into developing individual responsible leaders. Although this might sound straightforward, there are traps and difficulties along the way. First and foremost, I intend to present a frank and honest picture and, where I have from my experience identified real challenges to overcome, I shall tell it as it is. After all, if this were easy we would all be doing it by now.

Throughout the book, in the form of 'reflections', I will provide some discussion questions and prompts that can be used individually and also in groups as you wish. My intent with these is to help you grapple with this emerging scenario and your response to it. The easy option will be to skim over these and move quickly on to the next chapter or section. If you find yourself doing this, I encourage you to pause momentarily to ask yourself why. Is it because you know the answers or that you have moved beyond this point in your own demonstration of leadership? That is quite possible, but so too is the fact that the point is challenging and might require your attention.

Finally, I want to end on a hopeful note, setting out a positive vision of the future for us to aspire towards (Part 3). I believe profoundly in the power of a positive narrative to inspire and call forth the good in us, so this book is not merely identifying a 'burning platform' (a phrase I have come to loathe in my time working with organizations, if I am totally honest).

As to a definition of responsible leadership, in Chapter 1 I set out what I believe to be the components of a definition that each of us can weigh in

our contexts. What it does and will include is how we as leaders are more considerate, trustworthy, inspiring, interconnected, selfless and properly courageous. If you find yourself railing against these words, please read on. You may be surprised. If you find yourself agreeing with them, I am glad, and I invite you to press on too so that you may find encouragement.

Who is this book for?

Fundamentally, this book is for anyone who wants to think about leaders and leadership in the 21st century. There are many fabulous books available for those interested in leadership and I will reference many of these throughout. My perspective is one among many and I encourage you to have an open mind and to pick out nuggets that seem to resonate for you.

You may already be in a leadership position (senior or junior) in a large or small organization. Equally, you may be someone who aspires to be in a leadership position. Whether you have been doing this for some time or have been recently identified as someone with potential, I believe there is learning available, and my hope is that in this book you will find some that works for you.

For those working in the human resources (HR) or learning and development (L&D) or organizational development (OD) functions inside businesses, this book will provide you with some ideas and possible ammunition in your role. I have chosen to identify openly with this population as it is in this space that I have spent a large part of my working life. For ours is the task of influence and counsel, which itself carries great responsibility, perhaps without the overt recognition that comes with being the main man or woman.

As you read this book, you will inevitably have questions yourself. You will agree and disagree with me. You will cheer and be incensed. Naturally, I hope you enjoy it. Whatever your reaction or response, please engage with me in the debate and play your part in co-creating a different future. At the end of the book, I will offer some ways in which we can do this, together – another key principle of responsible leadership.

How did we end up here?

01

“Only a few find the way; some don’t recognize it when they do; some don’t ever want to.”

(THE CHESHIRE CAT, ALICE IN WONDERLAND BY LEWIS CARROLL)

To arrive at a shared understanding of what we mean by responsible leadership, I want to invite you to think upon the following set of words. What comes to mind and what images form for you when you read ‘betrayal’, ‘mistrust’, ‘broken promises’, ‘feathering their own nests’? Now I invite you to do the same but for the following set of words: ‘focused on the bigger picture’, ‘inspiring commitment’, ‘visionary’, ‘enabling’. You may have visualized people from the pages and screens of today’s press or media. Perhaps a businessman. Perhaps a political leader. Maybe you found yourself drawing on characters or storylines from fiction or the movies. Equally, you may not have focused on people at all but found yourself generating other images from art or nature. I wonder if you thought about yourself or close friends and colleagues as you pondered on these simple words? Now consider the following phrases and what images they stimulate for you: ‘concerned about the wider impact’; ‘driven by something deeper’; ‘bringing people together’; ‘humble and determined’; ‘brings the best out of people’. Such phrases could have been taken from a statement of capabilities for leaders and I have little doubt that they appear in many such frameworks. This book is about them and more. It is also about the less attractive words in the first sentence. This book is about leading differently, and to do that, you and I will need to consider how we *do* experience leadership, how we *would want to* experience leadership, and what the world today *needs* in the form of leadership.

The last point is critical. Our world is fast changing, more obviously interconnected than ever before, more diverse and full of apparent dilemmas and tensions. Tensions such as how to embrace both short-term and longer-term

perspectives; how to steward resources wisely while providing for immediate basic needs; how to encourage use of talent and rewarding careers while preserving family units; how to reward investors while satisfying all stakeholders; how to respond with agility and behave ethically; how to be mindful of the needs of emerging and mature economies. Therefore, those who choose or are chosen to lead have this as their backdrop.

This book is about leading and being responsible, which is an orientation, an attitude, a way of being. It embraces:

- seeing the wider system or bigger picture and being intentionally mindful of the consequences of decisions in that wider system;
- choosing to be morally accountable and to act for the greater good in the short and long term;
- caring about others and enabling them to create;
- as a leader and as an organization, cultivating the right environment to make this possible.

My assertion is that this requires a fresh expression of leadership that is genuinely attractive to many and that benefits the many. One that is both simple and tough. The question, then, is what might this look like in practice and how can it be developed? Furthermore, who among us is ready to model it? We will address these questions throughout the book, but beforehand, it is helpful to contextualize our current situation by exploring the journey of discovery we have been on to understand leadership.

Forming our mental models of leadership

To begin with, we acknowledge that we have all constructed our mental models about leadership based on those people we have encountered in our lives who modelled leadership for us. Typically this happens first in those institutions we are part of early in our lives, such as schools, churches, communities, social and friendship groups, families even. Inspirational teachers and youth leaders can live with us for the rest of our lives. Equally so, the experience of bullies or dominant figures.

From the outset, as we all have a strong drive to belong, to fit in, and as we learn by mimicking, it is no surprise that we try to replicate those behaviours and patterns that we see in people whom we regard as being effective or impressive. Thus our personal perspectives on leading and being led are shaped.

Allow me a short personal story to illustrate this and maybe spark a connection for you. When I was at secondary school at the formative ages of

11 through 16, I was exposed to leadership at its most raw. The headmaster of the grammar school I attended was at the top of the hierarchy. He was first an academic and an archaeologist. He was passionate about history and took delight in encouraging his pupils to explore history kinaesthetically – an inspiration to anyone who loved history, naturally.

He was charged primarily with the direction and management of a school containing seven hundred boys and the potent mix of testosterone, ambition and mischief. He had authority and was respected, which was made easier because he was a cheerful man who did his best to connect with pupils. He had power through his position in the system. As Barry Oshry identified in his insightful work on systems thinking (2007), to which we will refer periodically in this book, he was the ‘top’. I represented the bottom of this particular system. He and his fellow teachers could use their power to inspire, encourage and release. Equally, they could use it to suppress and sow fear.

Within the different levels in the school system, leadership was demonstrated in many different ways and informally. Class clowns led through personality. Gifted sports people led through their ability to galvanize and achieve. Subject-matter experts led through their knowledge and, if they were skilled enough, their ability to share that with others. School bullies tried to lead by control and fear. Emergent leadership was recognized as pupils were invited to take on responsibility as prefects and monitors – the historical Greek and Roman influences were strong, and, for one of them, the prize of being head boy. Unfortunately, the bases for these selections were not communicated, which, upon reflection, I think was a missed opportunity. But then it was the mid-1970s and our understanding of leadership effectiveness as a society was embryonic.

What has all this got to do with our topic of ‘the responsible leader’ and moreover leadership as we experience it today? First, I want to encourage you to adopt a thoughtful and reflective approach, and by illustrating leadership from an experience that we can all relate to, we begin to bring our own perspective front of mind.

In a school, a remarkably full gambit of leadership manifestations is present, and much of it is to do with human nature and our natural responses and reactions. This will manifest through our natural instinct to follow and conform in order to belong, or our natural instinct to influence and control. It will involve our unavoidable urge to be with people who are like us. Through these reactions and responses we develop patterns of thinking that shape how we lead and follow. And these patterns are tested, verified, challenged and reshaped along life’s journey.