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For Immediate Release

Real Leadership

Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges

By Dean Williams

In *Real Leadership: Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges*, Dean Williams offers a new, more effective alternative to the traditional notion of leadership. Rather than simply following the vision of any ordained leader without question, Williams argues that the true task of a leader is getting people to face the reality of any situation *themselves*, thereby prompting them to develop their own strategies for dealing with problems. Williams argues that any leadership that lets people sidestep the sometimes harsh truth of reality is irresponsible—and ultimately ineffective. He then offers a new paradigm that redefines the proper function and purpose of leadership—*responsible* leadership.

Williams points out that irresponsible leadership is not only ineffective, but also dangerous. Uncritically going along with someone else's "vision" hampers people's ability to anticipate and react to changing circumstances. Subsequently, if the leader is misled, the entire organization will suffer accordingly. People under these leaders are never asked to challenge the values, habits, practices, and priorities that thwart progress—thereby creating a self-limiting cycle that can never go beyond the current challenge.

In contrast, Williams claims that leaders who are responsible with their power do not dictate, but rather allow for people to determine what shifts in their values, habits, practices, and priorities will be necessary for accommodating changing conditions and new demands. This kind of leader mobilizes people to address the organization's most pressing challenge—the primary threat or opportunity that must be confronted in order to progress.

Williams details how to apply this new approach to six different challenges that every organization faces. Throughout, he uses examples from his own experiences—working with organizations as diverse as the government of Singapore, Aetna Life and Casualty, and the nomadic Penan tribe in Borneo—as well as historical examples and the insight gleaned from his many interviews with presidents, prime ministers, and business leaders to demonstrate the practical applications of real leadership in the real world. At a time when the direction of so many "visionary" leaders have led their organizations to disaster, *Real Leadership* offers a needed revised job description.

“Dean Williams’ book is a brilliant achievement – a challenging, energizing, path-breaking study of the challenges that leaders face. [It] will have definitely a transforming effect on everyone – ranging from leaders of tiny social groups, tribes, and families to the biggest corporations, international institutions, and nations... I believe this is the most significant work of scholarship dealing with the changing role of leadership at any level.”

– Elbegdorj Tsakhia, Prime Minister of Mongolia

“A wise and capacious book on the real challenges of leadership. Williams writes with a rare and unique global perspective. I thoroughly enjoyed it and learned a lot.”

– Warren Bennis, University Professor, University of Southern California, and author of *On Becoming a Leader* and coauthor of *Geeks and Geezers: How Values, Era, and Defining Moments Shape Leaders*

“Dean Williams has studied the actions of leaders in diverse fields and abstracted the attributes he classifies as ‘real leadership.’ Leaders of any organization – whether CEOs, directors, or ministers – can benefit from studying the principles he has distilled.”

– Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore

“Individuals can make a difference, particularly if they are willing to exercise real leadership. In part this may be instinctive, but much of it can be learned. I welcome the broad and refreshing approach Dean Williams adopts, which should help to foster new leadership.”

– Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

“Dean Williams has thoroughly encapsulated the art and practice of real leadership. This is not just another leadership book – but a well-developed set of theories and best practices, reinforced through excellent historical examples and cases, that strengthens leaders at all levels.”

– Marshall Carter, Chairman of the New York Stock Exchange

DEAN WILLIAMS is Lecturer in Public Policy at the Center for Public Leadership, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. At Harvard he created and directed the Superintendent’s Leadership Program for enhancing leadership capacity in large urban school districts. He has advised many organizations throughout the world, including Dunn and Bradstreet, *The New York Times*, Aetna, and McKinsey, as well as many governments, such as East Timor, Singapore, Australia, and Brunei. He is currently working with the government of Madagascar and with government, business, and community leaders in Columbia.

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