

---

---

## Book Review

### **The Leader's Pocket Guide: 101 Indispensable Tools, Tips, and Techniques for Any Situation,**

*by John Baldoni (2012),*

*Hard Cover 224 pp*

*\$19.95*

*Published by AMACOM*

---

#### **What are the details of the book?**

"It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching." - St. Francis of Assisi

If you want to learn the ropes of leadership, you read this book. If you want to be equipped with tools and techniques about leadership, you read this book. If you want an international authoritative resource on leadership, you read this book. If you want to add value to your organization and excel as the greatest leader, you read this book. John Baldoni's book titled, *The Leader's Pocket Guide: 101 Indispensable Tools, Tips, and Techniques for Any Situation* contains 224 pages with 101 well-punched inspiring chapters based on his vast leadership and coaching experience will help you lead on with confidence.

#### **Why is it worthwhile?**

John Baldoni needs no introduction. He is an internationally acclaimed leadership educator and executive coach and the president of Baldoni Consulting LLC, a full-service executive coaching leadership development firm. He is passionate about leadership and wants to make a difference in the lives of others. Hence, you can imagine the takeaways from this book.

#### **What is inside?**

This is a pocket book containing 101 chapters with prologue, and handbook,

acknowledgements and notes at the end. It is organized into three sections-self, colleagues, and organization-the book supplies you with short, to-the-point ideas on various aspects of coaching and leadership development. For John, coaching is close to his heart. The readers can identify John's commitment and involvement about leadership throughout the book. Above all, the book speaks John's experience. It provides apt quotes in each chapter as John himself is a lover of great quotes, and "Think About..." sections that help readers reflect, review and apply in their real lives to excel as leaders. In addition, it helps you relate the theory with practice thus enhancing application of knowledge effectively.

#### **John provides action tips for self as follows:**

1. Find your sources of inspiration. They may come from a book or from direct observation. Keep an open mind about where the inspiration comes from.
2. Think about how you will put your character into action to effect positive outcomes.
3. Be realistic about your limitations. Some you can improve through education and experience. Others you will need to understand so you can work with those who have with them.
4. Be accountable for your actions, even when you make a mistake.
5. Check your ego at the door as you hold it open for others' accomplishments to shine.

6. Find a colleague who can serve as your trusted advisor or personal coach.
7. Make time for reflection. Choose a regular time and place to take stock of what is going on.

### John outlines action tips for organizations as follows:

1. Adopt the "what, not how" style of management. Give people an assignment and let them figure out how to do it for themselves. Make yourself available to provide assistance when asked.
2. Regard dissent as an opportunity to explore alternatives. Dissent is the best protection against groupthink.
3. When you make a hard decision, put the organization first, not yourself.
4. Praise your team when it perseveres in the face of adversity. Be available to support team members and be their champion.
5. Look on the light side life is tough enough without being serious all of the time. Allow for some levity.
6. Make a habit of meeting and mingling with all levels of your organization. Listen more than you speak.
7. Consider roadblocks as opportunities for learning as well as opportunities for you to lead.

### Leadership Formulae

Here are some of the mathematical formulae John outlines at the end of the chapters:

Leadership Presence = Authenticity + "Right Stuff"

Resilience = Perseverance + Practice.

Holistic Leadership = Work + Others + Self

Ego = Ambition = Humility

Leader's Checklist = Purpose + Priorities + Tasks.

Priority = Goal + Meaning + Work

Hubris = Ego - Humility

Coaching = Investment in Others.

Authenticity = Authority + Accessibility

Engagement = Purpose + Commitment

Delegation = Authority + Responsibility

Perseverance = Truth + Determination

Need + Reason + Action = Urgency

Accountability = Responsibility + Consequence

Team Success = Collaboration + Commitment

Leadership Balance = Stability + Flexibility

Transparency = Openness + Trust

Inspiration = Purpose + Intended Outcome.

### What are the takeaways?

- Passion gets you up in the morning. It is the fuel that drives you to immerse yourself in your work and deliver results. To demonstrate passion, set high goals; stoke the fires; and measure results.
- Leadership depends upon perception. It should reflect your inner character. But it will not unless you put your character into great and lead by example.
- A leader who can laugh at himself defuses tension, relaxes the team and enables people to take the work seriously but not themselves.
- While management is administrative, leadership is aspirational.
- A task list focuses on what to do right now. It is Intentional - how to respond to changing conditions; Actionable - what to do right now; Changeable - how to react when circumstances change.
- If your boss is not giving you feedback, ask for it.
- Tough times are the right time to practice troubleshooting.
- Compromise is not for the faint of heart; it takes guts to work with people with whom you disagree.
- Compliment others for the constructive feedback they are offering. You can do this even when the criticism is more critical than helpful because it shows that you are someone who is above pettiness. Others might be petty, but you are one who takes the high road. That demonstrates strength of character.

- Address employees as contributors, not as costs.
- Leadership is about helping those around you to succeed by putting them into positions from which they can succeed.
- Courtesy and comity are welcome in the workplace, but don't let them serve as an excuse for not addressing serious issues.
- Leadership is not a popularity contest. The mark of a good leader is how he leads against the odds or even against popular convention.
- If you value your people, don't do it with words. Do it with actions.
- Training and development are typically cut during down economies. That's too bad, because often the acquisition of new skills and the development of untapped talents are the factors that will help the company survive the downturn. Sometimes downturns bring lulls in the work flow. Use such time wisely by grooming your talent base.
- A candidate who schmoozes with a bigwig but blows off a secretary shows a lack of courtesy.
- Channel your energies into your work, but keep in tune with yourself and the people close to you.
- Understand that defeat is not the end. For instance, the Churchill of 1915 prepared the way for the Churchill of 1940 to become the savior of his nation.
- Resilient leaders take the long view and never get too low when they fail or too high when they succeed. They maintain perspective.
- Positivism must prevail over pessimism.
- Don't use words like "stupid" and "idiotic" when referring to senior managers. You may feel like saying them, but avoid doing so. Use words such as "challenged" or "unaware."
- The pause radiates calmness. It demonstrates that you are in control.
- Avoid hyperbole. Just as you would not pour gasoline over an open flame, do not use words like "disastrous," "catastrophe," and

"meltdown." Such words escalate tensions; a leader's job is to de-escalate tension.

- Just because you have gotten people to stop shouting at each other does not mean they are working together. Continue to monitor the situation. Watch for warning signs among former combatants such as angry expressions, lack of eye contact, and the silent treatment.
- It is a good lesson for anyone who achieves success to remind himself that success is earned, not bestowed. You need to keep earning it.
- Grousing and grumbling are part of the everyday workplace, but if such words begin to encroach on behavior, the manager must step in. Complaints will be accepted, but complaining will not. The former may be justified; the latter is not because it affects behavior. The manager needs to keep the team focused on the work and on the goals.
- When the chips are down, the leader should be the first one to pick them up.
- Remember that the long-term gain outweighs the short-term pain.
- Those in charge, especially those in very senior positions, must be careful not only with their words but also with their body language. Here are some suggestions: Relax your facial muscles; invite inspection; and don't blow off steam.
- Stories are the ideal vehicle for inspiring people because successful stories can dramatize the human condition.
- Leaders by nature are not quitters. Their strength emerges from their resolve to persevere.
- Don't wait till you retire to develop your outside interests.

This book is a "short course" on leadership useful for people who lead a hectic life. It presents key ideas and insights about leadership on a platter so that you can read it in one sitting and practice. It unfolds you to cherry-pick essences of leadership tools and techniques for becoming a successful and effective leader.

It is a unique book on leadership offering the leadership nuggets in a distilled format. The book is inspiring with well punched ideas and insights thus hitting the bull's eye. It is useful to leaders at all levels. It contains pearls of wisdom. It is written in a simple language and conversational tone. This is a good resource for people to excel as leaders. It is useful for busy executives who can read during their travelling time. You can easily toss the book into a briefcase, or purse and read here and there as time allows.

**What is the recommendation?**

John Baldoni is a gem in leadership. He knows how to articulate his ideas effectively. He worked hard, smart and wise to cater his best to the readers. It is one of the rarest books I have read in my life and I advise my students and participants during my leadership programs to read this book. Anyone who wants to learn about the length and breadth of leadership and coaching this is the best book under the sun on the earth. If you are passionate about leadership, read this book more than once. It will change the way you think about leadership, converts ordinary leader into extraordinary leader and equips you with tools, tips, and techniques for any situation to excel as a great leader. You can gift this book to your friends and they will thank you forever for your kind gesture.

Enjoy reading this book to acquire leadership wisdom!

**Prof. M. S. Rao\***

(\*Internationally acknowledged leadership educator, speaker and consultant)