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# Book Review: Top Reads for Transforming Your Leadership Journey

**Despina Wilson, JD, Esq.** March 24, 2025 Chief Executive Insider

We're all looking for a playbook that provides the insights needed for excelling in leadership and in life. The outstanding books in this list drive home the top tips for career and leadership success — from an unrelenting curiosity, to remaining resilient, to believing in oneself, to putting learning at the forefront, and more. Whether a seasoned executive or just stepping into your first leadership role, these books offer inspiration for every leader.

**My Heart Has Been in it from the Start, by Steve Larsen**, weaves his personal and professional journeys to impart valuable life lessons for navigating life's major forces. At age 15, Larsen underwent three corrective heart surgeries when they were still experimental and was clinically dead for nearly 6 hours. Mending a broken heart became more figurative after the devastating loss of his son. Larsen chronicles the many moments in his life that called for fierce resilience, including the strategies involved in his nine startups, sone of which led to technologies that would power Facebook, Google, and Amazon. What's more, Larsen's motorcycle journeys in 18 countries and 43 states highlight his spirit of exploration and how to embrace life's full spectrum of experiences.

In **How Leaders Learn: Master the Habits of the World's Most Successful People**, bestselling author **David Novak** describes his astonishing life story from a trailer-park kid who lived in 23 states before starting high school, to ascending the ranks at PepsiCo and becoming cofounder and CEO of global restaurant icon, Yum! Brands. He credits putting active learning at the center of his career, his leadership, and his relationships as the motivating force for his remarkable ascension. The lessons aren't sugar-coated — he reminds readers that failures and setbacks are all part of the learning process. Novak's compilation of wisdom and practical habits from his own life and from some of the most successful leaders in the world, including Warren Buffet and Tom Brady, show all the ways, big and small, to become an active learner.

The tell-all memoir, **Build Something: Building Products, Business & Culture – A Journey of Hard-Won Lessons and Impactful Outcomes**, by veteran technology leader, **Michael Cerdá**, reveals what really matters in the art of building products and companies — that success is only achieved in environments where people feel empowered to contribute their best work. Gleaned from his hard-earned wisdom from bootstrapping his way into top management roles at several of the world's most influential companies and founding multiple startups of his own, Cerdá packs his book with practical insights and inspiration for driving innovation, leading with authenticity, and leaving a lasting impact. The real magic, he writes, isn't in the platforms or products, but in the teams, the culture, and the audacious belief that you can build something that matters.

In Who the **F*ck Is Michael? An Israeli Air Force Chief's Uncompromising Code for Achieving Greatness, by Elyezer Shkedy**, a retired Israeli Air Force commander and the former CEO of El Al airline, readers learn important lessons about leadership, tolerance, and personal values distilled from Shkedy's inspiring life stories. Since the book's release in 2022, it's become the most-read book by Israeli military personnel, is a staple of countless companies, and won a Golden Book Award in Israel. The title refers to his son's teacher, who told Elyezer his son would never learn to read — yet he taught his son to read in just a few months through his own methods. Emphasizing hard work and personal responsibility, Shkedy's stories illustrate how we can all apply his uncompromising code for achieving greatness.

As each of these books reveals, leaders are not born — they reach career success by embodying active learning, responsibility, and self-determination. Through hard work and a reliance on core values, they transform themselves to achieve incredible heights.