Excerpt from **You Don't Need a Title To Be a Leader**

From **The Introduction**

Recently, the vice president of a multinational technology company I know needed someone on his team to lead a critical project. It wasn’t enough to find someone who would do a good job. He needed a leader who would do a great job.

After careful thought and consideration, he approached a colleague, whom I’ll call Bob, who was considered an up-and comer. Bob had demonstrated tremendous potential. His work on previous projects had been exemplary. As past performance is one of the best indicators of future performance, the VP decided to sit down with him.

After explaining the project and what he wanted Bob to do, the VP extended an invitation to him to lead the project.

After a brief pause, Bob responded, “I assume you’ll make me a director if I take this on.”

His unexpected response caused the VP to pause. What were Bob’s real motivations? Was he a person driven by the need to contribute, or the need to gain? Would he act in the best interest of the organization, or only himself ? After brief hesitation, the VP explained that the title change didn’t go with the assignment. Furthermore, he went on, given Bob’s concern, maybe Bob wasn’t the right person to lead the project. The VP withdrew his offer and went back to the drawing board. After more deliberation, he came up with an alternative candidate. The person who came to mind was a woman, Gail, who had also shown great promise. Gail wasn’t actually a member of his team—in fact, she acted in a freelance capacity. But the VP knew Gail’s can-do attitude and strong people and problem- solving skills were what was needed. Despite her lack of an official position within the company, the VP decided to ask Gail to lead the project.

Given his experience with Bob, he approached her with some apprehension. After extending the offer, he added: “I want you to know that if you accept this challenge, and succeed, I can’t automatically make you a director.”

Gail didn’t even hesitate. “That’s all right,” she said. “I don’t need a title to be a leader.”

**Leadership is Influence**
I couldn’t have said it any better. You don’t need a title to be a leader in life. And the simple fact of having a title won’t make you a leader.

I’ve found that everyone has the opportunity to lead, every day. It doesn’t matter what your position is, or how long you’ve worked at your job, whether you help to run your family, a PTA committee, or a Fortune 1000 company. Anyone at any level can learn to be a leader and help to shape or influence the world around them.

• Do you shape your life and career?
• Do you inspire or influence others?
• Do you work to achieve specific goals by working with or coordinating the efforts of others?

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If you answered “yes” to any of these questions whether you realize it or not, you are a leader.

Leadership expert John Maxwell describes leadership as positive influence. That is the most simple and elegant definition of leadership I know.

In my experience, people lead for different reasons. The one thing they do have in common is passion — passion for life and for what they do. It’s an attitude that applies in spades to West Point’s Karen Wood. For more than twenty years, Karen has worked as an aide to the adjutant general.

Had it not been for Karen’s dogged perseverance, Donald Stewart, a World War II veteran, might not have gotten the recognition he deserved for his service as a medic on the front lines in 1943. He had saved the lives of countless soldiers while under fire himself. When Karen discovered that Mr. Stewart had never been awarded a Bronze Star for his valor and courage, she worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the award presentation a reality. Given the veteran’s advanced age, Karen knew it was critical to get him the award as quickly as possible. She found a way to cut through the red tape and make it happen, as she had orchestrated so many important events at West Point.

For years, Karen’s own dream had been to become a protocol officer. But rather than interviewing for the position, she simply worked as hard, and passionately, and selflessly in her role as aide as she knew how, consistently giving her best efforts to the officers she worked with. The higher-ups at the Academy were well aware of her exemplary performance and leadership, and her qualifications for the job. Given that, you won’t be surprised to learn that Karen was recently promoted. She is now a protocol officer, working for the superintendent of the Academy.

“I believe that if you give 110 percent in your work it will come back tenfold,” she says. As the single parent of a fifteen year-old daughter, this is the work ethic she tries to teach her daughter, as well.

“Life is what you make of it. The more you put into it, the more it reflects back on you.”

**How Does a Leader Act?**
What are the key characteristics of titled and untitled leaders?

They:

• Believe they can positively shape their lives and careers.
• Lead through their relationships with people, as opposed to their control over people.
• Collaborate rather than control.
• Persuade others to contribute, rather than order them to.
• Get others to follow them out of respect and commitment rather than fear and compliance.

**The Leadership Test**
Despite popular myth, leaders—whether titled or untitled—aren’t born. They learn how to lead. The real test of leadership is: If you had no title or ability to reward or penalize others, could you still get them to follow you?

You may be unaware of just how much of a leader you already are. You may be part of a large group of people I call the “undertitled.” In other words, your title doesn’t reflect all that you do or accomplish. If

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that describes you, don’t let your lack of a title hold you back. You are a leader. (Conversely, we all know “leaders” who have impressive titles but who are anything but leaders.)

For those of you who would like to have a greater impact on those around you, this book will help show you how to become a leader.

One last thing. There are plenty of books written about leadership with a capital L. The focus of this book is on “little l” leadership—whether you are a clerk or an accountant, or a manager, or a salesperson or a small-business owner. It is about the small things each of us can do every day to positively influence our customers, our colleagues, our friends, and our communities.

You aspire to lead if you want to:

• take control of your life
• make your organization better
• seize new opportunities
• improve the service your customers receive
• influence others to be their best
• solve problems
• contribute to the betterment of others
• make the world a little better place

And you don’t need a title to do it.

<http://www.leadershipnow.com/leadershop/0385517475excerpt.html>