Ten Must-Read Business Books
(Compiled by Thomas G. Reid, JD, CPCM, Fellow)

These ten primary books will give you an excellent overview of key issues involved in leadership. Most of them are classics and given the leaders who have read them provides a convenient starting point for conversations, networking, and issue resolution. More importantly, they will inform your thinking and decision making in a very positive way. Each of the ten has a follow up suggestion. If you have read the primary book, turn to the alternate. If you are a voracious reader, tackle all twenty.

   a. This book is available in over 36 languages and numerous editions. Any of them are worth reading. It has sold over 15 million copies. It’s the kind of book that if you have not read it in the past five years – read it again. There is just too much to absorb in one reading, and as you mature much of the material will take on greater meaning and depth. The alternate is a Covey book that will greatly inform your sense of leadership style.

   a. Every negotiator should have read this seminal classic by now, but if not – get to it. The alternate is a more recent tome from one of the primary authors of the main suggestion. It will assist you in any negotiation whether personal or business.

   a. The art of phrasing good questions will help you see issues more clearly and cut to the real motivations behind peoples’ positions. Most people do not think clearly; a good questioner can help that process along and more effectively serve to mediate situations. The follow up is an excellent guide for times when you have to tell someone something that will probably not be received well. There is an art to this as well.

   a. A true classic that must be read by all leaders. The follow up is the book that would have been #11 if the list were that long. It is the first in a series of excellent works from the Gallup organization – yeah, the survey people.
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   a. Teambuilding is a critical skill for leaders. Too many of them do not do it well. Lencioni is always a quick enlightening read. There’s even a manga edition if you are into that style of writing. Godin is equally light but wordier. Still, both are excellent in understanding team dynamics.

   a. This is the only leadership book that has scientific data and brain scans monopolizing the first two chapters. The key thing is that women and men are biologically different in more ways than body styles might suggest. It makes clear that not ALL women are exactly one way and not ALL men are exactly a different way, but collectively they are different enough that a good leader understands this dynamic. The follow up is the best book on communication that you will find. The author has a series of books covering all types of relationships and the issues that arise in communication among them.

   a. As a general rule, if Maxwell wrote it you should try to read it. He has two books on this list. This particular selection was a tossup between this one and his related book titled Developing the Leader within You. The follow up asks an extremely pertinent question and makes the point (among many others) that management might decide who is in charge, but the followers will determine who the leader is.

   a. Jim Collins is a must-read for any leader. His later books are equally important, but start with this one. Change being inevitable, Harvard Professor Kotter has written extensively on the subject and is a writer that great leaders recognize as adding value to the conversation.

   a. This is the second Maxwell book on the list, and gets toward the issue of character. Many would argue that without character no other leadership trait matters. It’s a powerful argument. Maxwell’s point is that ethics are ethics. Right is right and wrong is wrong whether you are involved in a business or a personal issue. This is an excellent quick read. The follow up is a classic from Og Mandino and should be part of any leader’s library.
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   a. One key measure of leadership success is results. On the one hand this can lead to “win at any cost” thinking, and that can lead to significant disasters. Consider Enron and Worldcom as examples. What the authors suggest here is that proper execution yields positive results. The follow up suggestion is a longer read and well worth the time investment. Ben is an entertaining and at times raucous writer, not to mention one of the wise men who qualifies as a “founding father.” His chapter on how he attacked his many bad habits is outstanding for anyone looking to engage in a little self improvement. There are several editions of this public domain book.