

Super Summary

Overview

Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't (2014) is inspirational speaker Simon Sinek's second book, a follow-up to *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (2009). The book's title is derived from a practice in which Marine Corps Officers eat last, sacrificing their own needs for those in their care. Sacrifice is key. Sinek explores the ways in which successful individuals and companies develop cultures built on sacrifice, on trust. By intentionally cultivating what Sinek calls a "Circle of Safety," effective leaders protect their organizations from infighting and in doing so, maximize results. Companies don't have to choose between their own people or profit—this is a false **dichotomy** that often misleads leaders who adopt ruthless measures to pursue the latter at all costs. By examining the benefits of "leaders eating last," he articulates a vision he hopes can improve the modern workplace.

Sinek opens Part 1 by telling the story of Captain Mike "Johnny Bravo" Drowley, a man who led with empathy, risking his own life during a dangerous mission in Afghanistan. Sinek uses this story to emphasize the power of empathy as a key component of effective leadership, then goes on to explain the "Circle of Safety" (i.e., protecting people within an organization from outside dangers by ensuring that competition and rivalries don't take over). He stresses how stress often has more to do with a toxic environment created or enabled by higher-ups than the work itself.

In Part 2, Sinek delves into early humans and their concerns with survival, which required constant collaboration. The human need for safety is biological by nature. There are four chemicals that help shape people's experiences in life: **endorphins**, **dopamine**, **serotonin** and **oxytocin**. Sinek also mentions **cortisol**, a chemical released in our bodies when we feel stressed or threatened. He argues that we are chemically wired to respond well to certain situations, which conditions our inclinations to return to said situations in the future.

In Part 3, Sinek discusses trust. Without trust, commitment rarely becomes an integral part of a company's core values, which in turn leads to a high turnover rate.

In Part 4, Sinek argues that the Baby Boomer generation's ideology set the stage for a number of issues in the modern workplace (i.e., cynicism and self-interest)—the result being a dangerous tendency to dehumanize groups of people.

In Part 5, Sinek cautions against the dangers of abstraction—generalization—a dehumanizing force in human ethics. The practical side of **abstraction** turns humans into mere ideas, people into figures on a spreadsheet. When we operate with this mentality, we divorce our conscience from decisions that focus entirely on profit.

In Part 6, Sinek delves into destructive abundance. This occurs when profits are prioritized for their own sake, even at the expense of employees and potential qualitative experiences. He proposes five lessons in leadership: "So Goes the Culture, So Goes the Company," "So Goes

the Leader, So Goes the Culture,” “Integrity Matters,” “Friends Matter,” and “Lead the People, Not the Numbers.” In each of these lessons, Sinek provides specific examples to support his reasoning, from the United States Armed Forces to Costco.

In Part 7, Sinek articulates the challenges that come with our current addiction to technology—particularly among **Millennials**, who often clash with the Boomer generation while shaping the modern workplace. We’re a society addicted to the dopamine that comes with social media, which jeopardizes our ability to become a collaborative society shaped by empathy and long-term positive change.

In Part 8, Sinek concludes the book by reinforcing empathy and trust as key components of leadership. He invites the reader to embrace more meaningful leadership roles, therefore becoming the type of leader we all wished we had.