

THE 10 SURPRISING THINGS HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL LEADERS DO DIFFERENTLY

Great Leaders Have No Rules: Contrarian Leadership Principles to Transform Your Team and Business, New York Times bestselling author and CEO of LEADx, Kevin Kruse, delivers the truth about what it takes to succeed in the new world of work.

1 Close Your Open Door Policy

Use “office hours” instead. It will force team autonomy and empowerment, and eliminate “got a minute” meetings.

3 Have No Rules

Rules disengage the 99% to reduce risk from the 1%. Instead, hire great talent, use values as guardrails, and coach those who still make bad decisions.

6 Crowd Your Calendar

Nothing is more valuable than time. Every minute wasted, is a minute not spent on retaining your team or getting results.

9 Show Weakness

Vulnerability and authenticity builds trust and psychological safety, which in turn drives both engagement and innovation.

2 Turn Off Your Smartphone

Smartphones interrupt deep work and feed FOMO. Don't be a Pavlovian dog - check your phone when *you* want to.

4 Be Likable, Not Liked

A *need* to be liked interferes with giving feedback and decision making. But no need to be a jerk-at-work.

7 Play Favorites

Treating everyone the same is unfair. Play to strengths, reward top performers, and individualize your leadership.

10 Leadership Is NOT A Choice

You influence your team both by what you do, and by what you don't do. Stay in your office or walk the halls, say hello or avert your eyes, take action or be a bystander, speak up or stay silent—you are always leading in one direction, or another. **How will you lead today?**



5 Lead With Love

Caring drives engagement and loyalty. And remember, you can love a person even if you don't like them.

8 Reveal Everything

Transparency drives decision quality, speed, and engagement. Besides, if you don't reveal it, they'll just imagine something worse.

GREAT LEADERS HAVE NO RULES

The Contrarian Leader's Workbook

Chapter 1

Close Your Open Door Policy

KEY IDEA: "Close your door, and open your calendar."

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- How often are you interrupted throughout the day?
- How would you feel if someone on your team "leap frogged" and went directly to your superior about an issue?
- Do you feel comfortable making decisions without running it by your boss first? Why or why not?

TAKE ACTION

Which hours of the day will you strive to protect as your "DEEP WORK" time? _____

Which days and hours will you reserve for "OFFICE HOURS"?

Chapter 2

Shut Off Your Smart Phone

KEY IDEA: "Stop responding like Pavlov's dog every time your phone dings. Turn off all notifications, pick up your phone when you want to use it."

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- How many hours a day are you on your phone? How often do you pick it up? Do you think that's too much?
- Do you think you're addicted to your phone? Why or why not?
- Does your phone interfere with your productivity? Do you use it as a way to procrastinate?

TAKE ACTION

Turn off all notifications on your smartphone.

Decide how often you will check for work-related emails and messages throughout the day. (3 times a day? Hourly? Every 15 minutes?) _____

Commit to never using your phone while driving (unless talking in hands free mode).

GREAT LEADERS HAVE NO RULES

The Contrarian Leader's Workbook

Chapter 3

Have No Rules

KEY IDEA: "Every rule takes away the opportunity to make a decision, thus leading to disengagement. Replace rules with values as guardrails, conversations, and coaching."

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- Which rules in your organization seem to disempower and disengage employees?
- Are your organization's values clear and actionable?
- How do you feel about rules at home? Should teenagers have curfews? Should there be rules between spouses?

TAKE ACTION

Ask your colleagues which rules bother them the most.

What is one rule that you think does more harm than good? Seek to eliminate it. Rule: _____

Hold a conversation with your team (or family) about existing rules and why they are in place.

Chapter 4

Be Likable, Not Liked

KEY IDEA: "A leader's need to be liked can slow down decision making and impede constructive feedback. Team members don't need another friend, they need a leader."

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- Is the culture in your organization too "nice"? Do people give candid feedback or worry too much about hurting people's feelings?
- Should managers remain aloof?
- Would you rather work on a high performing team that has an impersonal leader, or on an average performing team with a nice friendly boss?

TAKE ACTION

We all liked to be liked, but deep down, do you have a need for external validation? Do you have a need to be liked?

Identify situations in the last year when you've withheld feedback or struggled to make a decision. _____

What situations are coming up that will require a "not attached" leadership style? _____

GREAT LEADERS HAVE NO RULES

The Contrarian Leader's Workbook

Chapter 5

Lead With Love

KEY IDEA: *"You can still love everyone the same even if you don't like them all the same."*

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- What do you think about the idea of loving people at work — in the greater sense of loving all humankind (i.e., "Love thy neighbor")?
- Can you dislike someone personally but still help them to succeed?
- Is your current team or work culture a supportive nurturing culture, or a competitive and combative culture?

TAKE ACTION

Think of someone you dislike at work, and consider, what things from their upbringing or their past may have led them to behave the way they do?

Think of someone you don't get along with at work or in your personal life and consider, do you just have opposite personality traits?

Think of someone you may have clashed with in the past and let them know that despite your past differences, you want them to succeed and you are willing to help in any way.

Chapter 6

Crowd Your Calendar

KEY IDEA: *"Time is your most valuable asset, so why be so careless with even a single minute? Great leaders work from a schedule, not a to-do list."*

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- How many things are on your to-do list, and how many have been there for more than a few weeks?
- What are the things you really wish you had time to work on but never do?
- Do you only put phone calls and meetings on your calendar, or also time to work on projects?

TAKE ACTION

Identify your "most important task" for tomorrow and SCHEDULE time to work on it as early in the morning as possible.

SCHEDULE time for "deep work", decision making, and creative thinking in your mornings; move meetings to the afternoon.

Take the important-but-not-urgent items on your to-do list and schedule time to work on them on your calendar.

GREAT LEADERS HAVE NO RULES

The Contrarian Leader's Workbook

Chapter 7

Play Favorites

KEY IDEA: *"The most unfair thing to do, is to treat everyone the same."*

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- What is the difference between favoritism and playing favorites?
- Should high performers and low performers in the same role be compensated the same?
- Should a manager spend more time with high performers, low performers, or give everyone the same amount of time?

TAKE ACTION

Great leaders individualize their leadership. Think of what motivates each person on your team. _____

How can you reward — financially or in other ways — your very top performers? _____

What can you do this week to re-recruit your star team members? _____

Chapter 8

Reveal Everything

KEY IDEA: *"Transparency builds trust and enables faster decision making."*

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- Do you feel that there are too many secrets in your company? In what areas?
- Do people gossip and guess about issues that they don't have enough information about?
- How would you feel if everyone knew your salary, and you knew theirs?

TAKE ACTION

Vow to share complete information with your team in the future — the good and bad, strengths and weaknesses, your vision and challenges.

Create a formula or "rules" to determine salary levels in each role so they aren't arbitrary.

What do you most fear your team knowing about? Tell them.

GREAT LEADERS HAVE NO RULES

The Contrarian Leader's Workbook

Chapter 9

Show Weakness

KEY IDEA: *"Vulnerability and authenticity drive trust and engagement."*

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- Think of the best boss you ever had. Did they share with you their own struggles or failures?
- Where is the line between being authentic and oversharing or TMI (too much information)?
- Do people in your organization feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes?

TAKE ACTION

What are some of your biggest career mistakes and how can they be reframed as learning experiences? _____

Say, "I don't know" the next time you are asked a question and you don't know the answer.

Tell your team that if they aren't failing occasionally they aren't experimenting or being innovative enough.

Chapter 10

Leadership Is Not A Choice

KEY IDEA: *"Leadership is influence. You influence with your words, but also your silence; your actions, and when you do nothing. You are either leading in a good direction or a bad direction."*

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- How would you define leadership in a single word?
- Which people at work have the most positive impact when they join a meeting or enter a room? Why?
- Do you agree that leadership "isn't a choice"?

TAKE ACTION

In your next meeting, voice your support or your concerns.

When you walk the halls, keep your head high, smile, and greet people you encounter.

Go home, and realize you are leading—you're influencing—your family, too.