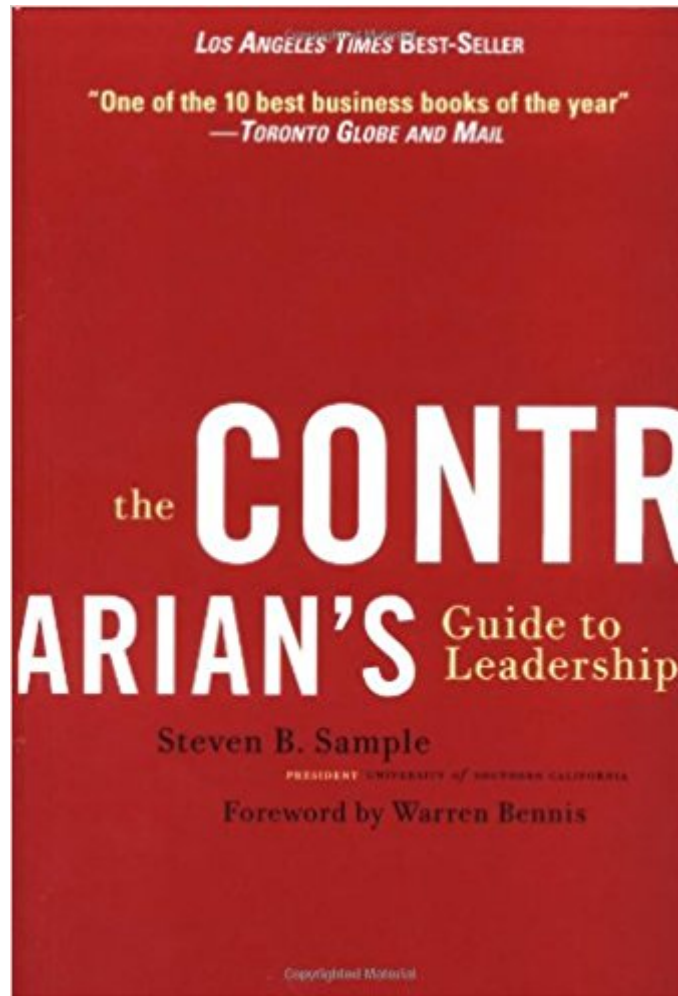




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# The Contrarian's Guide To Leadership



## Synopsis

In this offbeat approach to leadership, college president Steven B. Sample-the man who turned the University of Southern California into one of the most respected and highly rated universities in the country-challenges many conventional teachings on the subject. Here, Sample outlines an iconoclastic style of leadership that flies in the face of current leadership thought, but a style that unquestionably works, nevertheless. Sample urges leaders and aspiring leaders to focus on some key counterintuitive truths. He offers his own down-to-earth, homespun, and often provocative advice on some complex and thoughtful issues. And he provides many practical, if controversial, tactics for successful leadership, suggesting, among other things, that leaders should sometimes compromise their principles, not read everything that comes across their desks, and always put off decisions.

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## Customer Reviews

In *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership*, University of Southern California President Steven Sample offers up a refreshing perspective on the characteristics of a successful leader. Some of Sample's prescriptions: try reading Machiavelli's *The Prince* instead of *The New York Times*, learn to work for those who work for you, and "Anything worth doing at all is worth doing poorly. It may be worth more if it's done well, but it's worth something if it's done poorly." This book is not just for CEO's: middle management and anyone interested in promoting good leadership will benefit as well. --Harry C. Edwards --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"An intoxicating read, a bushwacker's delight ..."

I first heard about this book in Bill Hybels "Courageous Leadership." Hybels requires all of his leaders in his church to first read this book. Surprisingly this book is not based on Christian leadership. The main idea behind the book is that Sample takes ideas that are commonly thought of as a leaders best practices and show why leaders should do just the opposite. (Contrarian definition: a person who opposes or rejects popular opinion) I had no idea what a contrarian was before reading this book, but learned alot of valuable ideals. This book really challenged me to think outside the box. As the title says, the topics covered in this book usually go against what everyone holds as a leaders best practices. In each chapter I had to think about what was being covered and why it made sense to go against the popular belief besides what Sample was simply writing about. I did not want to just take him at his word, but challenged myself to see why his points either made sense, or did not at all. I highly recommend this book to stretch your mind in leadership practices. Very early on in the book Sample challenges the reader to make a hypothetical decision that no-one ever would want to have to make, but it sets the tone for the book for getting the reader out of their current mold and challenging why they think that way. This book also has alot of practical applications and is not just all theory and thought. I tend to learn through example and find it easier to connect with a book that has practical implications rather than be just about theory. This book has a good mix and Sample makes sure to have practicality in all of his chapters and topics. Some of my favorite quotes from the book: "... the leader's role is to be sufficiently broad so as to be able to integrate the advice of several experts into a coherent course of action."- Showed me that a leader does not have to be the know-all in all particular fields that they observe, that is what the experts are for. The leader just needs to have experts in specific areas that they trust and have the ability to gather all the information and formulate an appropriate plan."..., an effective leader must sell himself first and his vision or policies second."- A leader must have followers, if not they are not a leader. If a leader does not first sell themselves and show others why they should follow, then the leader has no chance of getting people on board to follow their vision. So when being a leader you need to make sure those you lead trust you as a person before they trust your vision. "If you leave a white post alone it will soon be a black post. If you particularly want it to be white you must be always painting it again." (Quote from G.K. Chesterton)- A simple thought but can be applied to alot of places in life. As with leadership and inspiring others to a vision, eventually excitement will wane. Thus everything will take continued work. You are either improving or degrading, no staying the

same.

Steven B. Sample, the tenth president of USC, and past president of other notable universities brought to us a great book about leadership. Here, he plainly states that this book can be read out of context to other chapters and that the reader can “feel free to keep what appeals to you and simply forget the rest” (Sample, 2003, p. 5). It is this nonchalant perspective on how the reader can engage the art of leadership that speaks volumes to how it correlates to intersectoral leadership topics. In fact, much like collaboration, Sample (2003) pointed out that leadership is always a work in progress since it is “never finished and complete; rather, they are always evolving, always changing, never static” (p. 5). In this book, Sample (2003) talks about fifteen (15) principles that would help a leader “break free of the wisdom of the herd, and strike out in bold new directions” (p. 189). Here are some of the principles that really matched topics of intersectoral leadership: (1) “think gray”; and (2) “work to bring out the best in your followers (and yourself) while minimizing the worst” where the overall view on leadership is that it is “highly situational and contingent” (pp. 189-190). With the first principle, the ability to be flexible and suspend judgment closely matches the topic of negotiations and decision making within intersectoral leadership, where a decision should be made after all relevant facts are available or there is a requirement to make a choice. As to the second principle, collaboration within intersectoral leadership can greatly be benefited by having a good understanding of the realities of human nature and knowing what actions might be taken and how the leader can adapt to ensure their followers are able to accomplish a common goal. Though an aspect that would benefit such learning within intersectoral leadership is that a leader “must learn to live with dirt on their hands in order to achieve larger ends” since that can include making the hard decisions that a leader would have to own up to when they act for their followers (Sample, 2003, p. 95). Thus, striving to be original, not led by the herd or influenced as easily, while striking the balance between collaboration and leadership, is the tightrope that as Sample (2003) cited Bennis, leads to “leaders do[ing] the right thing” (p. 192). This book is worth reading to know how to be an effective architect of intersectoral leadership history in the making. Reference Sample, S.B. (2003). *The contrarian’s guide to leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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