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THE OFFSITE

By Robert H. Thompson

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Thompson “has offered us all, through his characters, the opportunity to examine The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership . . . in a unique and playful way that gives new life and meaning to what leaders do when they are functioning at their best.”

-- Jim Kouzes, author of *The Leadership Challenge*

PASSION AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT ARE THE BEDROCK OF SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP, SAYS BUSINESS EXPERT ROBERT H. THOMPSON IN NEW BOOK

THE OFFSITE Debunks Common Myths About What Makes Leaders Great

“Leadership is not about being the boss, or telling people what to do, or having all the right answers. It’s about passion, personal commitment and eliminating the gap between beliefs and behaviors,” says Robert H. Thompson, author of **THE OFFSITE** (Jossey-Bass, March 2008), a compelling new book that debunks many long-held myths about leadership. Written in the form of a business fable, **THE OFFSITE** is based on Thompson’s twenty-five-year career as a journalist, entrepreneur, seminar leader, and executive coach. The book is unique because it presents Thompson’s special spin on the concepts developed by leadership gurus Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner with whom he has long been associated.

Thompson focuses on Kouzes’ and Posner’s “Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership,” showing how a group of executives and their teams learn to implement the practices during a critical offsite meeting. Readers meet Sam, Jerry, Gwen, Joe, Charlie, Abby, and others. They each have their own quirks and personal stories, allowing readers to relate to the characters of their choice.

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The Story

Sam is the éminence grise, the semi-retired business guru who discovered the leadership practices years ago and continues to do occasional mentoring. Jerry is a newly-appointed corporate vice president who studied with Sam and shares his beliefs that the leader's job is to nurture and teach. "It's an obligation to help people grow," he says.

Gwen is the sales manager who reports to Jerry. She's lost touch with her core values. Her command-and-control style has demoralized her team. During the offsite, she learns to tap her reserves of courage and to lead with vision. Joe is another manager. He's been promoted so many times, that he's no longer doing the work he loves. He's angry, morose, and disruptive. During the offsite, he hits rock bottom. It is only then that he – and senior management – realize that he's in the wrong job, and that they need to work together to find a solution. Charlie and Abby are the facilitators, who help the others find their way, while trying to resolve their own personal issues.

The Five Practices

As depicted in **THE OFFSITE**, the "Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership" are:

- Model the Way** – It's not just what leaders say, but what they do that really matters – and it's up to them to behave the way they want others to behave. But first they must know who they are and what really matters to them.

- Inspire a Shared Vision** – Leaders must envision the future and create a roadmap for getting there. Their vision story must inspire others to join the effort and appeal to shared aspirations.

- Challenge the Process** – Leaders must search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve. Leaders are pioneers who challenge the status quo.

- Enable Others to Act** – Leaders make it possible for others to do good work by fostering collaboration, building trust, and facilitating relationships. They must strengthen the talent around them by increasing self-determination and developing competence.

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•**Encourage the Heart** – Leaders must recognize everyone’s contributions, showing appreciation for individual excellence. They should celebrate accomplishments and create a spirit of community.

According to Thompson, “leadership is a choice about creating open, honest, and authentic relationships that urge others to want to discover their power and focus on what matters to them and their community.” To do so, leaders need to constantly learn and grow. It’s not enough to say you will implement the “Five Practices” and then forget them as soon as the next task pops up on your to-do list. Instead leaders must personally commit to the practices on an ongoing basis, constantly seeking improvement. It’s a moment to moment choice, explains Thompson, and leadership is for everyone, no matter what their job title or position. He illustrates all of these points through the thoughts, conversations, and actions of his characters, making **THE OFFSITE** a profoundly moving and enjoyable book to read.

Based on in-depth research that proves that people who embrace the Five Practices are dramatically more effective than those who cling to outdated or mythical leadership styles, **THE OFFSITE** is a very special book that will help readers discover the passion they need to achieve their masterpiece.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROBERT H. THOMPSON is a sought-after speaker, leader and executive coach. Founder of Applied Performance (www.leaderinsideout.com), a leadership and personal communication services company, Thompson’s clients include AT&T, Amgen, Hewlett-Packard, Johnson & Johnson, Lockheed Martin, Qwest, Sony, Sun Microsystems, The Gap, and Visa. Thompson was a senior consultant with the Tom Peters Company for many years.

Before founding Applied Performance, Thompson created, managed, and sold a successful regional newspaper publishing company and a national advertising sales company, which he guided to international prominence through relationships with Proctor and Gamble, General Motors, Bayer and other major corporations.

As the founder of a corporate nonprofit exchange program for aspiring post-communist business professionals, Thompson attained a key role in the Clinton-Yeltsin “Business for Russia” initiative. He has served on the board of advisors for a successful internet start-up company and assisted the group through their initial public offering.

After graduating from San Jose State University, Thompson spent thirteen years working for the *San Jose Mercury News*.