

# 9 Essential Business Books for Leaders and Entrepreneurs

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We're well past the standard fare when it comes to today's great business books. Why? The world of business is not the same, from AI-driven transformation to ever-changing demands to a constantly shifting market environment. As new rules and regulations fluctuate supply chains, concerns about the workforce, as companies fight to stay relevant and maintain their market position, decision makers are under more stress than ever. What helps: books that offer something more, a new approach, a human side, strategies for embracing innovation without being swallowed whole, anything but the usual formulas.



Here, then, are 9 books that fit the bill. The list includes newcomers and bestsellers, hidden gems and secret weapons. They encompass a broad range of perspectives: futurists, technologists, executive coaches, performance experts, and brand wizards. It's a trove of great resources and actionable insights for refreshing your perspective, getting re-inspired, and gaining a competitive edge.

1. Leading Becomes You: A Real-World Framework for Leading from the Inside Out by Natalie K. Pickering, PhD, is for any leader feeling like they've lost themselves. A TEDx speaker, leadership psychologist, and executive coach, Pickering helps leaders find their way back to their own identity, that's where the real power comes from, as she demonstrates. Packed with case studies, exercises, and practical tools, and written to be relatable, engaging, and inspiring, this book will hit close to home with any leader who needs to reconnect to their sense of purpose and remember who they are.
2. The Thinking Machine: Jensen Huang, Nvidia, and the World's Most Coveted Microchip by Steven Witt is a fascinating biography of a groundbreaking leader who's made plenty of bestseller lists. It's a great tale of entrepreneurial daring, thinking outside the box, being an astounding success, and pretty much reshaping the world. The meteoric rise of Nvidia to the most valuable corporation on earth started in a Denny's over thirty years ago. Huang had the vision to stake everything on AI and win. His microchip enabled the AI transformation now fully underway. Witt's done his homework, the result is a page-turner of a true story for anyone interested in business, technology, and visionaries.
3. Winning Match: Leadership for Game Changers—Together Toward the Extraordinary by Dr. Christian Marcolli upends reigning assumptions on how to lead and who to lead. It also has a neat connection to tennis superstar Roger Federer. For over a decade, Marcolli worked with Federer's longtime head coach, Severin Lüthi, on how to keep the legend performing at his peak (read about it in Lüthi's foreword to the book). But these strategies work for those high performers in any sphere, which Marcolli called Game Changers. These are the people in your company who truly have the potential to do extraordinary things if you know how to identify, support, and challenge them. Marcolli asserts that leadership and the right environment enable excellence, so don't leave your best people alone.

4. AI and the Octopus Organization: Building the Superintelligent Firm by Jonathan Brill and Steve Wunker is a (very) data-driven, copiously researched guide to running an organization in the AI era. Brill and Wunker are unabashed futurists and innovators with a refreshingly clear vision on AI. They interviewed many AI experts for this multidimensional book. They cover an immense range of topics with heart and authority, such as avoiding workplace fear and distrust, cost-effective rollouts, and just diving in.
5. Nature's Blueprint for Business: Harnessing the Hidden Power of Edges by Ines Garcia takes a look at the oldest system there is, the natural world, as a model for organizations. Garcia is an organizational coach with plenty of practical experience: she knows all about the messy realities of company structures and cultures. A real-world challenge facing teams and organizations starts each chapter (and they ring true). The solutions she's proposing tap into what happens in nature when one element contacts another, the edge, and how resiliency and growth are built into the natural world. The book is filled with practical tips and examples of organizations who have been able to develop and thrive using this approach.
6. Unreasonable Hospitality: The Remarkable Power of Giving People More Than They Expect by Will Guidara is another longtime bestseller and a rousing tale of business gone right. Guidara led Eleven Madison Park from a middling restaurant to the best restaurant on the planet. The transformation ticks off all the boxes for entrepreneurial success: breaking the mold and starting over, leading an amazing team, going above and beyond in wildly creative ways, and offering the absolutely best service and product, bar none. This is a great lesson for any business in why giving more is such a powerful business strategy. It's also a great look inside an incredibly hot restaurant (and it may make you want to start one yourself).
7. The High-Altitude Entrepreneur: A Framework for Scaling Smarter, Leading Better, and Living Freer by Chris Clearfield is for founders who've built something real but find themselves trapped by their own success. Clearfield is a Gestalt-trained executive coach who has worked with successful entrepreneurs across industries. His High-Altitude Framework helps founders surface the hidden tensions driving their decisions, control vs. delegation, speed vs. thoroughness, and redesign their businesses to run on systems rather than constant vigilance. Through real-world case studies and a step-by-step approach, Clearfield shows how to move from reactive firefighting to strategic leadership, creating the freedom and impact that entrepreneurship promised in the first place.

8. Lessons from the Mat: The 12 Martial Arts Principles that Will Help You Succeed in Business and in Life by Benjamin Chen and Scott Burr is just what it sounds like. Both authors are serious martial artists with black belts in Jiu-Jitsu and other forms. Chen is also an extremely successful and driven entrepreneur whose bona fides include raising \$500+M of investment capital, starting a company from scratch that soared to \$250+M in revenue in its first six years, sitting on some major boards, and advising many an aspiring startup. All that to say that Chen has a startlingly practical philosophy about business (and life), based on very specific martial arts principles, that has proven itself time and again. Packed with common-sense strategies and interesting use cases, this is definitely a worthy read.
  
9. Strong Ground: The Lessons of Daring Leadership, the Tenacity of Paradox, and the Wisdom of the Human Spirit by Brené Brown is the latest in a long series by this endlessly inspiring and bestselling author. Dive in for a master class in the importance of connection and accountability, a topic that may even feel startling today. This is a book about being a good leader, an effective leader, and a growth-focused leader by having real conversations and situational awareness. Again, given these times, it's a wonderful reminder that resilience over the long haul doesn't come from being power-hungry, capricious, or arrogant.

That's the nine. A final note: this list was selected by actual humans, in case it matters. Let's keep ourselves in the construct and use these resources to better lead, deal, work, innovate, and face the future.

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