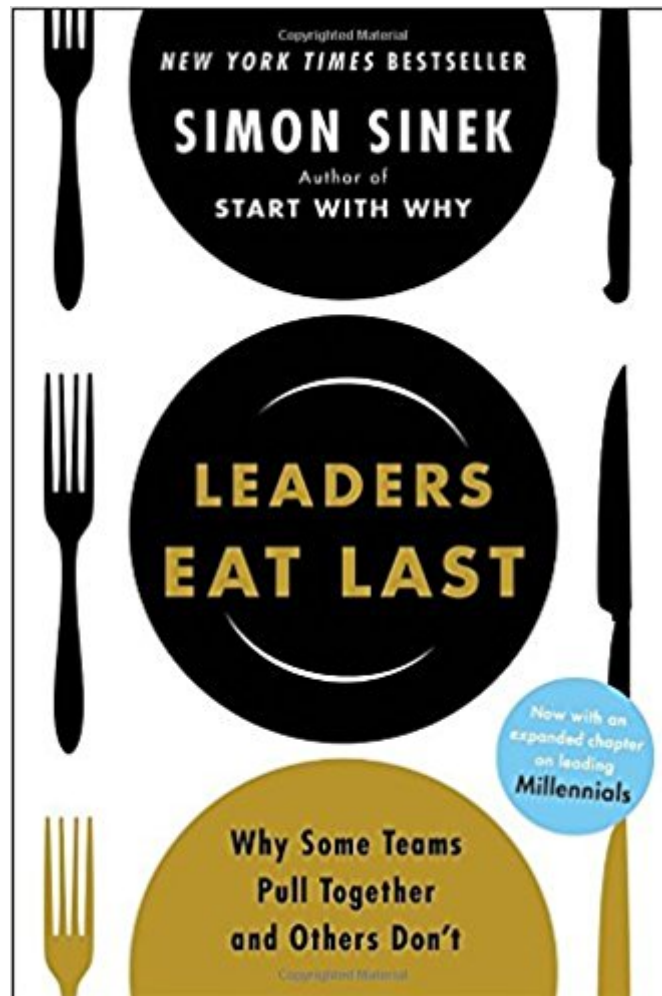




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# Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together And Others Don't



## Synopsis

Finally in paperback: the New York Times bestseller by the acclaimed, bestselling author of *Start With Why* and *Together is Better*. Now with an expanded chapter and appendix on leading millennials, based on Simon Sinek's viral video "Millenials in the workplace" (150+ million views). Imagine a world where almost everyone wakes up inspired to go to work, feels trusted and valued during the day, then returns home feeling fulfilled. This is not a crazy, idealized notion. Today, in many successful organizations, great leaders create environments in which people naturally work together to do remarkable things. In his work with organizations around the world, Simon Sinek noticed that some teams trust each other so deeply that they would literally put their lives on the line for each other. Other teams, no matter what incentives are offered, are doomed to infighting, fragmentation and failure. Why? The answer became clear during a conversation with a Marine Corps general. "Officers eat last," he said. Sinek watched as the most junior Marines ate first while the most senior Marines took their place at the back of the line. What's symbolic in the chow hall is deadly serious on the battlefield: Great leaders sacrifice their own comfort--even their own survival--for the good of those in their care.

Too many workplaces are driven by cynicism, paranoia, and self-interest. But the best ones foster trust and cooperation because their leaders build what Sinek calls a "Circle of Safety" that separates the security inside the team from the challenges outside. Sinek illustrates his ideas with fascinating true stories that range from the military to big business, from government to investment banking.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Simon Sinek is an optimist, teacher, writer, and worldwide public speaker. His first three books - *Start With Why*, *Leaders Eat Last*, and *Together is Better* - have been national and international bestsellers. His first TED talk, based on *Start With Why*, is the third most-viewed TED video of all time. Learn more about his work and how you can inspire those around you at [StartWithWhy.com](http://StartWithWhy.com).

There are many books on Leadership that have little to say. Sinek's book has both new insights and an inspiring vision. Sinek begins with biology and outlines the roles of chemicals - specifically Endorphins, Dopamine, Serotonin and Oxytocin - and how evolution has dictated why we generate them and how we respond to them. Endorphins mask pain and help give you a 'runner's high' or the intense satisfaction after a tough work out. Dopamine leads to your 'feeling good' upon accomplishing a goal whether that is bringing home dinner while evading sabre-toothed tigers or doing a bang-up job on a major presentation. Think of endorphins and Dopamine as the 'individual achievement' chemicals. We need them to excel at what we do. Serotonin is what gives you a feeling of gratitude and affection for the persons who supported you in your endeavors and the good feeling as they applaud you. Oxytocin is 'love' chemical. It gives you the warm fuzzies you get when you hug someone or have a deep meaningful conversation. Think of Serotonin and Oxytocin as the 'social' chemicals. We, as humans, need both the individual achievement and social chemicals to progress. What has happened, unfortunately, in our society is that mores and values have changed to emphasize the former to such an extent that a deadly imbalance has been created. It is truly toxic - your job may be killing you. I used to think this was hyperbole but Sinek presents enough evidence for me to revise this opinion. Central to Sinek's arguments is the 'Circle of Safety'. When a sabre-toothed tiger attacks a herd of buffalos they gather together with their tails touching and horns out. Whichever direction that tiger attacks, it is met with impenetrable defense. This is the circle of safety. We want to feel that there are persons we can trust who will look out for us. Where we can let our guard down and be ourselves. In such a trusting environment we can focus on doing the best we can and this greatly benefits both us, individually, the company. This feeling of 'belonging' is what has disappeared from the corporate workplace to a large extent. It has been replaced by an ethos of 'everyone for himself and the Devil take the hindmost'. And, sadly, even the 'winners' in this environment are actually losers because of the personal price they pay in terms of insecurity and lack of meaningful relations, not to mention health side effects. What I found really useful in the book is the way in which Sinek takes concepts from fields such as psychology and shows how they are relevant to what we experience in the workplace. I found these to be penetrating insights and they lead to many 'aha' moments as well as to a change in the way I conduct some of my own

programs. For example, take the Milgram experiments. These are some of the best known - and most shocking - experiments in psychology and the implications are truly horrifying. In the early sixties, shortly after the Adolf Eichmann capture, trial and execution, there was a lively debate on whether Nazi collaborators were simply 'following orders' or had a sense of responsibility and ownership for what they did. Yale professor Stanley Milgram devised a series of experiments in which a volunteer was asked to deliver electric shocks to a subject each time he made an 'error' in a lesson. Unbeknownst to the volunteer the subject was actually a confederate of the professor and an actor who affected great pain and suffering as the level of electric shocks increased. In reality there were no shocks and no pain but the volunteer did not know this. When volunteers demurred from administering painful electric shocks the white gowned Milgram told them in various ways that they were required to continue even when they thought that the shocks they were administering were severely harmful to the subject. The shocking result was that huge numbers of 'normal' persons - readily or with mild trepidation - continued to administer potentially lethal shocks to subjects even as they howled with pain and demanded that they be released from the experiment. And this happened simply because they were told to do so by an 'authority figure' with no threats or rewards for doing so. Obviously this has great implications for why dictatorships form and survive and the debate on this continues to this day. What Sinek points out is that this same experiment is played out in our companies every day at huge human toll. I had never thought of it in these terms before but parallel is exact. Many 'managers' willingly take actions that they know will bring hardship and suffering to others - mass layoffs, reductions in benefits, changes in working conditions etc. - simply because they have been directed to do so. Even worse, we have evolved a business 'philosophy' where formal directions are no longer necessary - this is simply the way to do things. Sinek talks about how to bring the balance back in our workplace so both companies and individuals can thrive side by side in a symbiotic relationship. And he gives lots of examples such as the Barry Wehmiller companies where CEO Bob Chapman is dedicated to 'building great people who do extraordinary things. And Charlie Kim, CEO of Next Jump who implemented a policy of lifetime employment. I particularly like his comparison of the results achieved by James Sinegal, CEO of Costco and Jack Welch the much touted former CEO of General Electric. Welch's paradigm of pitting executives against each other created a high stress environment and the gains were short-lived and unsustainable. In contrast Sinegal built a strong 'circle of safety' for his people, paid wages which were nearly double those at Walmart and did many things to engender loyalty and trust. Costco employees are loyal and have built it into the second largest retailer in the country and the growth is both balanced and continuing. This book will make you think differently about the

business systems that prevail in our society and also give you a way to make the workplace more humane. I hope you join the "Truly Human Leadership" bandwagon set rolling by Bob Chapman, CEO of the Barry Wehmiller companies. Be sure to watch his TEDx talk. Google it to get the URL.

Entertaining stories, interesting ideas, but very little useful (actionable) information. Nice to know that people are probably biologically wired to lead, follow and trust. But how many must you say the same thing? This book could have been one third its length. Simon Sinek spends most of the book repeating and rehashing how we're chemically and hormonally influenced in how we interact with others. The rest of the book is filled with the author's personal musings and ramblings about how this has caused baby boomers to ruin the world with corporate greed, in Congress, as parents, blah, blah, blah. I was hoping to learn new insights into leadership and how to apply them, but the book never got there. If you want to read a commentary on Simon Sinek's view of the world (à la Paul Harvey, Dave Barry, or Charles Osgood), this is an interesting read. If you're looking for a leadership book, I'd look elsewhere. I'd classify the book under "Human Interest," not "Business."

Leadership is not a licence to do less; it is a responsibility to do more, according to Simon Sinek in this book. Leadership takes work. It takes time and energy. The effects are not always easily measured and they are not always immediate. Leadership is always a commitment to human beings. Interesting statements made by the author include:

- Exceptional organisations have cultures in which the leaders provide cover from above and the people on the ground look out for each other.
- The leaders of great organisations do not see people as a commodity to be managed to help grow the money.
- Work-life balance has nothing to do with the hours we work or the stress we suffer; it has to do with where we feel safe.
- Most people would never get rid of their children during hard times, so how can we lay off our people under the same conditions?
- The leaders of organisations who rise through the ranks not because they want it but because the tribe keeps offering higher status out of gratitude for their willingness to sacrifice are the true leaders worthy of our trust and loyalty.

I was somewhat uncomfortable with the author's tendency to explain human motivation by reference to evolutionary biology and the chemicals dopamine, endorphins, serotonin, oxytocin and cortisol. In a book which argues that leadership is all about empathy and providing a safe and respectful environment in which everyone can thrive, it seems odd that the author apparently reduces humans to mere chemical machines. In my opinion this book contains an important message which senior leaders of organisations need to read and take to heart, although I expect that very few will be able to read through the book without

feeling convicted.

Being part of the organization that has a toxic culture, Simon has shown me why that is and what I can do to try and fix my little piece of it. If every officer in the military read this book, what a difference it would make. It's been a while since I have read a book that inspired me or taught me this much! You will not regret getting this book. Make sure to grab a pencil and take notes as you read it because there is so much good information as well as practical steps that you will constantly want to go back and refer to them.

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