

## BOOK REVIEW

**By Anne M. Greenhalgh, Deputy Director, McNulty Leadership Program**

Maxwell, C.I. “Lead Like a Guide: How World-Class Mountain Guides Inspire Us to Be Better Leaders.” (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2016). 133 pages. Foreword by Rodrigo Jordan, PhD, Mount Everest and K2 expedition leader. ISBN 978-1-4408-4416-4

In *Lead Like a Guide*, author Chris Maxwell takes a close look at the leadership strengths of expert mountain guides and considers what we can learn from those who help others reach for their highest goals in the most challenging of environments. Maxwell concludes that world-class mountain guides are socially intelligent, adaptable, empowering, trust-builders, risk-aware, and big-picture thinkers – and that these same leadership strengths can be productively applied by aspiring leaders in their own organizations.

Over the course of a decade, Maxwell traveled with and interviewed 15 international mountain guides, including six who summited Mount Everest. Along the way, Maxwell’s quest took him and over 200 Wharton Leadership Ventures participants to remote locations in the U.S., Quebec, Mexico, Peru, Patagonia, Iceland, and Nepal. In a sharp departure from the safety and familiarity of classroom learning, these unfamiliar environments often brought participants face-to-face with uncertainty, a condition which skilled guides leveraged to enhance individual and group learning.

Mount Everest climber and educator Rodrigo Jordan writes in his Foreword,

“Chris valuably includes a number of lessons learned and applied, which present excellent examples of his students’ experiences when they applied these six leadership strengths in their own work environments. This strongly validates that the way mountain guides exercise leadership can indeed be transferred to other realities, from the factory floor to the boardroom.”

Edmund Reese, a Wharton Executive MBA graduate and a VP and CFO at American Express, offers one example of a memorable lesson learned and applied. Reese was a team member on a summit climb of Wyoming’s Grand Teton. Reflecting on the guides’ ability to empower climbers to reach new heights, Reese writes,

“Having leadership responsibility for over 2,000 people, I’ve learned that to achieve our objectives and enjoy the work on the way to success, I must take the first big step. Generating confidence in the workplace to ensure that members know success is attainable and there will likely be a solution for challenges has been an important focus. The leadership lessons taught by both the guides and the mountain itself has honed my focus on embracing the front lines. After the strategy is set, delegate authority and stay close to those most directly engaged with the work. If we build leadership in others, we develop a stronger line and an overall stronger organization.”

*Lead Like a Guide* includes individual chapters dedicated to each of the six leadership strengths of guides, over 50 expedition participant reflections and lessons learned, and a set of detailed “Action Steps.” It is a book that draws important lessons from real-life experiences in challenging conditions, and will be a practical and helpful guide to those seeking to be a better leader, whether on the mountain or in the workplace.

Chris Maxwell can be contacted through his website, [www.leadlikeaguide.com](http://www.leadlikeaguide.com).