

Books on the Five Skills and How to Skim Them

There are more than 60,000 books currently on the market and hundreds of motivational speakers all pointing to the same five core skills. The more clearly and briefly we can summarize them the better. That's been my goal for many years: to make them practical for people to use easily, daily, in every situation.

A list of recommended books appears below.

Nevertheless when you find yourself stuck on one particular skill, it helps to have larger references you can go to for more detail. Among the 60,000 books on leadership, personal growth, skill development, better habits and many related subjects, you'll find in all likelihood more than a thousand on each of the five skill areas specifically.

Today I no longer read as many books in detail. I skim them for new slants on the core ideas which could make it easier to explain them to others. Having done this for a number of years now, three things stand out:

1. how to get the key ideas from books very quickly
2. how to get at the most useful sections when skimming a book
3. which books apply most directly to the five skill areas

Finding Great Book Reviews Quickly

The best source of useful book reviews today is Amazon.com (www.Amazon.com). You can find a book quickly if you have the title or especially if you have the correct spelling of the author's name. Clicking on the link "Product Details" takes you to a page which has both editorial and reader reviews beginning approximately halfway down. Reading the editorial summary and three or four of the reader reviews normally gives you a very good overview of the content of the whole book. Since the readers express pro and con opinions you get a nice balance of the value that you may get if you buy the book to dig into further detail. In many cases you won't need to go further. You will often get good ideas just from the reviews.

A second step if you want more detail that I recommend is trying your local library. Especially in major cities your library card number can often be used on the Internet at the library's site to request the book and in some cases have it delivered to your nearest branch. This usually means you'll also get a voicemail telling you the book has arrived. I find this saves tremendous time and cost, given that I often only need to skim a book to get more detail.

Digging Information Out Of Books Quickly

Once you have a book in your hands, if it isn't pleasure reading, your goal is to gather as much information that you personally need as quickly as you can. The usual principles apply that are covered in many how to study courses. Read the title and subtitle(s), skim the editorial blurbs and testimonials and do a quick check of the table of contents because it will highlight areas of particular interest to read more thoroughly.

Next is to skim the conclusion section and then decide whether it's worth reading the introductions or first chapter (these usually give the layout of the topics and may outline a brief summary of each). Assuming you're still interested, which is probably the case, you would then read the most interesting looking chapter and perhaps one or two others that also look particularly useful. I rarely go much further than that particularly since I'm now familiar with lots of surrounding ideas in the areas where I do the most work.

This rapid overview process allows you to get most out of a book that is relevant to you in perhaps 15 or 20 minutes versus the several hours that might take to read the entire work. With the pace of change today saving to time is essential and ideas that you might miss by not giving a more thorough reading will usually be covered by other similar works that you'll be looking at. In fact they'll likely be covered better in those other works as each author focuses on the core areas they're best informed about. So you'll get a better picture from another author who's more expert in the particular chapter or topic.

There certainly are cases where it pays to read the entire book carefully, but those books are reasonably rare. I've tried to capture some key ones related specifically to each of the five core skills for affective learning and leadership in the book list below.

Useful Books

Overall Leadership and Balance:

Good To Great (and **Built to Last** with Jerry Porras -1st book) – Jim Collins – What creates the greatest success for business (long term core values) and leaders (ability to focus goals not ego).

Winning – Jack Welch – An exceptional, clear view of a top company leader's thinking and methods. Written from his view as CEO of GE, but with excellent fundamentals.

The Extraordinary Leader – John (Jack) Zenger and Joseph Folkman – Five fatal flaws.

The Five Patterns of Extraordinary Careers – James M. Citrin & Richard A. Smith – Outlining the five keys for executives moving through careers – mirroring the five keys to leadership.

What Works Best - Nitin Nohria – the “4+2” elements of successful, broader, business strategy.

Flight of the Buffalo – James Belasco & Ralph Stayer – Leaders describe how they learned that the most effective leadership style is to transfer ownership to those led and support them.

Finding Flow – Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi – Interesting view of what creates “happy and effective.”

Feeling Positive:

Learned Optimism – Marty Seligman – Optimists are far more consistently successful.

The Positive Power of Negative Thinking: Using Defensive Pessimism to Harness Anxiety and Perform at Your Peak – Julie Norem – Identifies negative thinkers who were able to use that to motivate great work. Imagining all worst cases, they pleasantly surprised themselves.

Creative Thinking/Strategy/Ideas:

Polarity Management – Barry Johnson – Simplifies identifying and using paradoxes strategically.

Six Hats (and others) – Edward De Bono – The guru of creative thinking.

Time Management for Unmanageable People – Anne McGee-Cooper – Finding a creative, comfortable style of time management uniquely suited to you.

Time Management from the Inside Out – Julie Morgenstern – Lots of good exercises.

Organizing from the Inside Out – Julie Morgenstern – Organizing to get control of your situation.

Honesty and Resilience:

The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, is the Key.... – James Loehr’s new book and **Toughness Training for Life** – finding ways to rest, recharge and maximize.

Leadership Passages – David Dotlich – Key life/work events that help executives develop.

Geeks and Geezers – Warren Bennis – The essential value for all levels and generations of executives of learning to overcome adversity, from a world renown author of 22 leadership books.

The Relaxation Response – Herbert Benson – The classic work on how to relax.

Life Strategies – Phil McGraw – How many ways we sabotage ourselves.

Stop Screaming at the Microwave and I Used to Have a Handle on Life, But It Broke...

Mary LoVerde... not for women only.

Finding a Joyful Life in the Heart of Pain – Darlene Cohen – Surviving even constant pain.

A Path With Heart – Jack Kornfield – A wonderful Zen book for resting and recharging.

How to Change your Entire Life by Doing Absolutely Nothing – Karen Salmansohn – Fun+.

Action and Habits:

The Wealthy Barber – David Chilton – A successful Canadian on financial planning. Notice how powerfully simple habits you continue over a long time can dramatically improve your results.

Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done – Larry Bossidy – business advice.

Practice What You Preach – David Maister - Simple questions that make business leaders great.

Organizing for the Creative Person – Dorothy Lehmkuhl & Dolores Cotter Lamping

Leadership from the Inside Out – Kevin Cashman – A great leadership/coaching manual.

Learning to Lead – Jay Conger – Leadership can be learned – 4 typical approaches.

The Heart of Coaching – Thomas Crane – How coaching others creates transformation.

Other Possibilities:

Complexity – Mitchell Waldrop – A readable story of how he learned about complexity.

Management of the Absurd: Paradoxes in Leadership – Richard Farson – Fascinating paradoxes such as “Effective managers are not in control.”

The Big Five Personality Psychology factors: where to find out more –

Regardless of personality preferences, can you develop effective behaviors?

Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion (or Surgency – a tendency toward external action), appears in the psychiatric form which measures Neuroticism – the opposite end of the scale);

Sample test and more detailed descriptions via Ulrich Schimmak’s page: <http://tinyurl.com/4e9ko> or <http://www.erin.utoronto.ca/~w3psyuli/survey/bigfive/bigfive.htm>