

FOREWORD BY
Pennsylvania State Representative Brian K. Sims

PRIDE LEADERSHIP

STRATEGIES FOR THE

LGBTQ+ LEADER

TO BE THE **KING OR QUEEN** OF THEIR JUNGLE



DR. STEVEN R. YACOVELLI

PRAISE FOR PRIDE LEADERSHIP

.....

For nearly two decades NGLCC has been the business voice of the LGBT community, helping empower and elevate our business leaders worldwide. *Pride Leadership: Strategies for LGBTQ+ Professionals to be the King or Queen of their Jungle*, by NGLCC-certified business owner Dr. Steve Yacovelli, speaks to the importance of fostering the next generation of leaders in our community to ensure our social and economic progress continues moving forward toward opportunity and inclusion for all.

—Justin Nelson, Co-Founder & President,
National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)

Pride Leadership not only focuses on what I, too, feel are the most important leadership traits for anyone—authenticity, empathy, communication, courage, relationships, and change—but it sheds insight on these topics with a positive, engaging voice. Here's to every LGBTQ+ Leader taking a look at—and applying—the concepts in this book.

—Mike Dilbeck, Certified Speaking Professional and Fundraiser

Exploring leadership from a queer (LGBTQ+) perspective can be a challenge. There aren't many role models when you're an "outsider" or an insider within a marginalized group. The gifts our communities' experience can bring to leadership are not well articulated in the mainstream, but Steve Yacovelli has the chops to put all the pieces together. Read, then go forth and LEAD!

—*Jamison Green, PhD, President, Transgender Strategies Consulting, LLC; author of Becoming a Visible Man*

There are a lot of "leadership" books out there today, but none come to mind that speak directly to an LGBTQ Leader. In *Pride Leadership*, Steve not only speaks straight to our community (so to speak), but does so with empathy, passion, and practical wisdom. An enjoyable yet thoughtful read, I highly recommend this for any LGBTQ person wishing to amp up their leadership game.

—*Gina Duncan, Director of Transgender Equality, Equality Florida Institute*

Being an inclusive leader is so important, more now than ever before. For an LGBTQ+ Leader, understanding your power and influence in leveraging empathy, being authentic, managing relationships, and the other competencies Steve shares in *Pride Leadership* are great revelations for emerging leaders, and good practical reminders for experienced leaders. I highly recommend this fun, informative, and engaging read for any LGBTQ+ Leader.

—*Jon G. Munoz, Vice President, Global Diversity & Inclusion, Hilton*

Leadership books and courses are often designed to speak to the talents and cultural sensibilities of only a select group of society. Not only do we need to transform how we look at leadership, we also need to create models that resonate with emerging communities. *Pride Leadership* is a wonderful tool not only for LGBTQ leaders, but for anyone who wants to connect, serve, and empower today's emerging workforce.

—Dr. Joel A. Brown, Chief Visionary Officer,
Pneumos LLC

This book explores the power in embracing our true identities and harnessing that power to be genuine leaders. There is no more need to be the leader we thought we needed to be. Instead, we get to be the courageous leaders we deserve to become.

—Dr. Christopher Zacharda, Director of Student Conduct,
Tulane University

An accessible and essential read. Leadership in action. *Pride Leadership* is filled with resonant examples and exercises to teach profound lessons—to and about ourselves. It will teach you to think like an inclusive leader.

—Ingrid Galvez Thorp, Co-Founder of Thorp, LLC,
*a business management strategist specializing in human resources:
Organizational and Leadership Development*

Pride Leadership offers tactical and measurable strategies for LGBT+ leaders in the workplace. The six leadership competencies—specifically, authenticity and empathy—are spot-on and can lead both LGBT+ and Ally leaders to success.

—Wes Werbeck, COO,
Out Leadership

Dr. Steve Yacovelli has focused appropriately on leading with authenticity and integrity. These dimensions of leadership are critical distinguishing characteristics, and must be taught to and learned by leaders. As a skilled leadership development facilitator, Steve captures the essence of how the LGBTQ+ community can benefit from practical lessons in being the best leader possible. Steve's life lessons—framed from personal and professional experiences—are open, honest, and from the heart!

—Don Stenta, Assistant Vice President,
The Ohio State University Alumni Association
and Distinguished Adjunct Professor,
John Glenn College of Public Affairs

Under the Obama Administration, the federal government was tasked to develop ways to be more inclusive to the LGBTQ+ communities. I developed the Many Faces One Dream (MFOD) tour for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to answer that charge. One of the pillars of MFOD was the LGBT Business Builder, connecting entrepreneurs to SBA's business development resources to include access to capital. In addition, we focused our

messaging on “Leadership” being the key ingredient to success. We encouraged entrepreneurs to tap into their greatest resource—Leadership—and we would connect them to powerful networks to help them succeed, scale, and grow. *Pride Leadership* will serve America’s LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs very well. It is the perfect handbook for all leaders to follow.

—*Eugene Cornelius, Jr., Senior Director for Strategic Alliances
International Council for Small Business (ICSB)*

You have to see it to be it. Yet far too many LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs, executives, and employees alike are hard-pressed to identify out and proud possibility models crushing it in business. *Pride Leadership* offers the elixir guaranteed to encourage more rainbow family members to step out of their closets and onto their leadership thrones. Treat yourself to a healthy dose of professional development you can take with you on your next road trip, and enjoy the transformation.

—*Rhodes Perry, MPA, Founder + CEO of Rhodes Perry
Consulting, bestselling author of Belonging at Work,
and podcast host of The Out Entrepreneur*

Thoughtful, helpful, and wickedly enjoyable. If you lead any team, business, or organization, you’ll get a lot out of Steve’s insights found in *Pride Leadership*. Plus, it’s pretty darn fun to read.

—*Casey Nicholaw, Tony Award-winning
Broadway director/choreographer*

The experience of being in the LGBTQ community has been such an unexpected professional gift, in that I have gained so many skills through my efforts to be authentic, to connect with others, and to bring my full self to every interaction. At a time when so many are still closeted at work, this book provides encouragement and inspiration that identity can be a powerful engine of our success!

—*Jennifer Brown, Founder and CEO, Jennifer Brown Consulting, and author of “Inclusion: Diversity, the New Workplace, and the Will to Change” and “How to be an Inclusive Leader”*

PRIDE LEADERSHIP

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Strategies for the LGBTQ+ Leader
to be the King or Queen
of their Jungle

Steven R. Yacovelli, Ed.D.



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CHAPTER ONE

.....

LET'S GET THIS PRIDE LEADERSHIP PARTY STARTED!

"Having strong leadership skills is about having strong people skills. The best leaders realize that saying 'effective leadership' is synonymous to saying, 'working with people effectively.'"

– Dr. Steve Yacovelli

The Gay Leadership Dude

Proactive Communication • Relationship-Building • Integrity,
Authenticity, & Courage • Developing Culture • Empathy

Why the Topic of Leadership Anyway?

Before you start ... did you skip the Preface, especially the part where I talked about why I use LGBTQ+? If so, git on' back there, matey ... that's some important stuff. Go ahead ... I'll wait.

OK, back to it. As I shared in the beginning, I've been in the leadership development space for most of my career and even

pursued some schoolin' on the topic. When I set out to write a book on leadership two questions popped up in my little noggin:

1. What is *leadership* and how's it different than *management*?
2. *Leadership* is a really broad term. Which leadership concepts should I focus on?

To understand what leadership means to me, let's start with why we say *leadership* versus *management*. Just to be crystal clear: management and leadership are both essential to the success of anyone within the workplace jungle, and honestly, these two terms/concepts are strongly connected and cannot be separated. We are not talking about two people here: you have to be both—a good manager and a good leader—to be successful. It's not enough just to manage your department, team, or area, to make decisions and to develop good plans and scenarios. You have to implement these decisions and plans (that's all management stuff). And, as you implement these plans you will interact with your co-workers, team members, bosses, and customers. You have to convince them that your plans are the right path; you have to convince them to cooperate and to strive for a common goal (that's the leadershipy stuff).

In short: *management* is more concerned with systems, processes, and tasks while *leadership* is always about the people.

Think about your work jungle. Chances are you became a leader in your workplace because you had a certain subject matter expertise. Let's say I'm an accountant (trust me I'm not; but go with

me for a sec). I have a degree in accounting. After graduation I got a job as an accountant, and I get so good at playing with my debits and credits that they promote me to Head of Accountants. I was promoted to leadership because I'm such a rock star accountant; I'm great at the task of accounting.

But now my focus shifts: I'm in charge of the accounting *people* now. But there's a really good chance that I didn't necessarily study leading people at university; I focused my energies on accounting and the numbers. And now I'm out of my comfort zone of accounting. I'm now dealing with people, their problems, and their pesky emotions on a daily level. "I didn't sign up for this! I'm a numbers person!"

This is a lot of the leaders I've worked with over the years: SMEs (subject matter experts—or pronounced *smees*) who are so good at their respective areas of expertise that they get promoted into leadership, and they're not sure how to deal with the people factor in their roles. What can happen at this point is frustrating for the new leader. They may revert to what they know (the task) and potentially fall into micromanaging their people because that's what they know. No bueno.

Drone Perspective

The good news is that you're already on the path to avoid this scenario by picking up this book. And that self-awareness is what will separate you from others within your workplace jungle: the desire to not only see there's room to grow, but taking the steps to do something about that. Bravo!

One of the best strategies leaders can leverage is having that self-awareness. In my leadership workshops we do a lot of

self-reflection on our own leadership behavior as it relates to the topic at hand. For example, when discussing “sharing effective feedback” we go into reflecting on how we currently give feedback to others (if at all!) and ask ourselves if it’s the right way to do that. That self-reflection muscle isn’t always flexed in our 21st-century workplace jungle, and taking the time to stop, breathe, and have a think about what we did—and how we can do it better—is key to your growth as an LGBTQ+ Leader.

For some of us, it’s hard to “get out of our own head” and objectively look at our behavior. One strategy is through being mindful. *Mindfulness* is “the act of deliberately noticing new things, being present, and considering new perspectives” (Newlon, 2016, para. 4). This is not some “granola crunchy” yogi term, but the idea that through the practice of mindfulness and self-reflection we become more aware of what we are doing, saying, feeling, and acting in any given situation. Mindfulness has been proven to not just help you identify your own actions (especially those related to your unconscious biases and actions), but also to help increase productivity, increase morale, and provide overall health benefits (we’ll dive deeper into mindfulness and some good strategies to help with it a later in our convo).

Some folks refer to this as having a helicopter perspective, like you’re getting into a helicopter, zooming up, and seeing above the situation on how you’re behaving, acting, etc. Frankly, I find that a little old school, so I use the term *drone perspective* because it’s the same deal but: (1) drones are cooler and (2) drones are accessible and you can use cameras to see the high-level perspective.

With a drone, you’re able to hover above the situation and see the real-time footage through your phone or an app. Self-reflection

and mindfulness is like suddenly seeing through the drone what's happening around you; or what you are doing, how you are acting, and how others in the situation are reacting, too. Good, effective LGBTQ+ Leaders can get out of their heads and into that drone to get a read on the situation, learn from that data, and continue or adjust their actions and words to create a more effective situation.

Why are LGBTQ+ Folks "Good" at Leadership?

I've been leadershipin' (consulting in the leadership development and executive coaching space) for a heap of years (read: I'm old), and I have noticed certain trends over time on what makes a leader, well, awesome. Things like being authentic, having empathy for those who they work with, being courageous in tackling the tough situations, effectively communicating, etc. are all topics that—over the course of twenty-five-ish years—keep surfacing as the “must haves” for leaders to be successful at leading (and—coincidentally—those are topics in this book, but more on that in a few).

And, I've understood that I was a gay dude since about the same time as I entered into my communications profession. I've also noticed—in general terms—there's certain traits that LGBTQ+ people tend to be pretty good at* (*not stereotyping but a trend I observed). So, I theorized (or, as Carrie Bradshaw would say, “I couldn't help but wonder ...”): ...are LGBTQ+ people really, really good at certain leadership traits?”

After picking around the interwebs, I came across an awesome book, *The G Quotient* by Kirk Snyder. We'll go deep-diving into Kirk's book in a bit (Chapter 2), but overall his research supported

my theory that, yes, peeps in our Community have been shown to be good at certain leadership areas. WOOHOO!

But WHY are LGBTQ+ “good” at these certain leadership competencies or skills? I think it has to do with our collective experience as “the other.” Whether we’re out or not, we have known—consciously or unconsciously—that we’re different than the majority (and of course in the most fabulous way). But that feeling of being an outsider—and often an invisible minority—leads one to manage various social situations and interactions differently than an “out” or more obvious minority.

So, over time, I believe our conscious and/or unconscious selves start to understand how to maneuver these interactions: looking at others’ level of empathy and following suit, gauging someone’s “realness” or authenticity and deciding if we should match it. Through years of social engagement, we’ve been able to flex these human interaction muscles to help us fit in (and frankly—on an unconscious level—be safe in the group with which we’re engaging). So, as an LGBTQ+ person, we’ve had a lot of practice at understanding how to best engage with other humans, communicate with them, and understand how they’re feeling on an emotional level. Generally, that just so happens to be how awesome leaders are, well, awesome. Oh, and doesn’t that skill describe our definition of leadership?

Why These Specific Leadership Topics?

As noted earlier, leadership is a really broad topic; so how did I narrow it down to six specific leadership competencies which we’ll focus on in this book? In my experience and what I’ve observed

in the 21st-century workplace jungle is that—while so many different leadership competencies can contribute to overall leadership effectiveness—the six I picked here really keep bubbling up as the *crème-de-la-crème* competencies that lead to success:

1. Having Authenticity
2. Leadership Courage
3. Leveraging Empathy
4. Effective Communication
5. Building Relationships
6. Shaping Culture

I initially came up with about twenty-six different leadership competency areas. And—venturing a guess—assumed most busy professionals wouldn't have months on end to dredge through my leadership tomb (and nor did I have seven years to write it!). So, with the help of an awesome friend/thinking partner who's also a professional in the leadership and organizational space, we put each of these twenty-six competencies on Post-Its® and took a look. And through some analysis, reflecting on our respective experience, thinking about what our clients have said and seen in the workplace, and looking at the latest books on various leadership topics, we narrowed it all down to six key areas (thanks, Wes!).

What's interesting about the six competency areas we'll be discussing is that they are really intertwined. For example: the thread of “understanding our own emotions and that of others” is woven throughout our conversation. Likewise, managing our own conscious and unconscious biases is, too, a common thread that can impact our own leadership success. So, while we're tackling these

six leadership competencies chapter by chapter, they really wonderfully interconnect to make up the whole leadership you.

I'll be frank (even though my name is Steve). It was tough to decide which concepts went where, and so you'll see me take a nod to previous or upcoming topics. For example: having courage is a topic unto itself (it has its own chapter for Pete's sake ... wait: who's Pete? I thought we were taking about Frank? Ahh, I digress). But when we have the conversation about building relationships (Chapter 8) we also touch upon having the courage to step out of our own comfort zone to meet strangers and/or others who may not be like ourselves. So, we're not repeating repeating ourselves, but again it's how these topics are awesomely intertwined with one another.

While we'll be focusing on each of these concepts as one part, they really make up the whole PRIDE success for you as an LGBTQ+ Leader.

Howsthatnow? How Adults Learn

As noted earlier, as we keep that drone perspective in mind, let's fly up to take a bigger picture and talk about how adults (really humans overall) learn stuff. One of the best leadership skills—aside from what we share in this book—is the ability to self-diagnose how we're doing in any one area or competency. Part of your challenge in reading this book is to get out of your own space and get into that drone perspective. One of the analytical tools or strategies is to understand how adults learn.

Think about a blank page with four boxes: one at 12 on the clock, one at 3:00, one at 6:00, and one at 9:00. Now think about

"Being an inclusive leader is so important, more now than ever before. For an LGBTQ+ Leader, understanding your power and influence in leveraging empathy, being authentic, managing relationships, and the other competencies Steve shares in *Pride Leadership* are great revelations for emerging leaders, and good practical reminders for experienced leaders. I highly recommend this fun, informative, and engaging read for any LGBTQ+ Leader."

~ Jon G. Muñoz, Vice President, Global Diversity & Inclusion, Hilton

"Thoughtful, helpful, and wickedly enjoyable. If you lead any team, business, or organization, you'll get a lot out of Steve's insights found in *Pride Leadership*. Plus, it's pretty darn fun to read."

~ Casey Nicholaw, Tony Award-winning Broadway director/choreographer

"The experience of being in the LGBTQ community has been such an unexpected professional gift, in that I have gained so many skills through my efforts to be authentic, to connect with others, and to bring my full self to every interaction. At a time when so many are still closeted at work, this book provides encouragement and inspiration that identity can be a powerful engine of our success!"

~ Jennifer Brown, Founder & CEO, Jennifer Brown Consulting, and author of *Inclusion: Diversity, the New Workplace, and the Will to Change* (2016) and *How to be an Inclusive Leader* (2019)

Did you know that as a member of the LGBTQ+ Community you possess amazing leadership skills that you may not be capitalizing on?

Now, it's not to say that our straight brothers and sisters don't have the potential to be rock star leaders, but—through our shared experiences being LGBTQ+ folks—we've had the opportunity to truly develop skills such as leveraging empathy, shaping our culture, being courageous, and being authentic. These skills are some of the most sought-after leadership competencies in the workplace today ... and they're already inside you, dear LGBTQ+ professional!

In *Pride Leadership* Dr. Steve Yacovelli draws from his over twenty-five years of experience in the leadership development, change management, and diversity and inclusion consulting space, to identify the six key leadership traits that can greatly increase any LGBTQ+ Leader's effectiveness.

Whether you're a seasoned senior executive or a just-starting-out shiny new leader, *Pride Leadership* is your stop to hone your natural LGBTQ+ leadership awesomeness, gather a few kernels of wisdom to immediately apply in your workplace, and amp up your leadership-self to be just that much better-er.

In short: you'll be a more effective, impactful, and inclusive leader after reading this book. Oh, and you'll have a good time learning along the way!



Dr. Steve Yacovelli ("The Gay Leadership Dude") is Owner & Principal of TopDog Learning Group, LLC, a learning and development, leadership, change management, and diversity and consulting firm based in Orlando, FL, USA, with affiliates across the globe.

Steve has had the pleasure of working with some great client-partners who he considers to be members of his "pack." He's worked with Fortune 500 greats like The Walt Disney Company and Bayer; amazing not-for-profits like The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The American Library Association; large universities like The Ohio State University and The University of Central Florida; and small entrepreneurial rock stars like International Training & Development and GovMojo, Inc. Steve and TopDog thoroughly enjoy helping their client-partners grow and be successful through their corporate learning, change management, diversity and inclusion, and leadership consulting goodness.

With over twenty-five years' experience in leadership, strategy, organizational learning, and communication, Steve is a rare breed of professional that understands the power of using academic theory and applying it to the corporate setting to achieve business results. Oh, and he's quite fond of dogs, too.

Photo credit: J.D. Casto. Taken in the Orlando City Soccer Stadium at the 49 seats dedicated to the victims of the Pulse shooting. This photo was selected to celebrate and honor their lives. #orlandounited



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A portion of the proceeds will go toward organizations supporting and promoting leadership within the LGBTQ+ Community.

