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The Secret

THIRD EDITION

**WHAT GREAT LEADERS
KNOW AND DO**

Ken Blanchard

Mark Miller



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
San Francisco
a BK Business book

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*This book is dedicated to
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serving leaders.*

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Foreword

Everything rises and falls on leadership! That's why I've been a student, a practitioner, and an advocate of leadership for more than thirty years. That's also why I'm excited to introduce this third edition of *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*. Since its initial publication in 2004, this book has been translated into over twenty languages and has sold a half million copies around the globe. Clearly, the book has struck a chord in a world hungry for effective ideas on this important subject.

I'm not surprised that *The Secret* became a best seller. In fact, when I learned that Ken and Mark were collaborating on this project, I knew it would be a winner. Here's why:

Ken has been thinking and writing about leadership for four decades. Just look at this list of titles: *The One Minute Manager*[®], *Leadership and the One Minute Manager*, *Gung Ho!*, *Leading at a Higher Level*, *Raving Fans*, and *Whale Done!* The list could go on and on, and I'm sure you've heard of many of these books (I hope you've read some of them as well). Ken has sold more than twenty million books—and counting. He is one of very few authors in history to have four titles on the *Business Week* best-seller list at one time. Ken has helped to shape the way our generation leads.

Mark has taken a different path. For more than thirty-five years, he has been part of the leadership team at one of America's great organizations—Chick-fil-A, Inc., based in Atlanta, Georgia. Chick-fil-A is a quick-service restaurant company with more than 1,700 locations and sales over \$5 billion annually. Currently, Mark serves as vice president for organizational effectiveness. I've had the privilege of speaking at the company's annual meeting on two occasions, and these people get it! *The Secret* is no secret in this organization. It is at the heart of their success.

My challenge to you is simple: learn *The Secret*—then apply *The Secret*. If you do, your leadership and your life will be transformed forever.

—John C. Maxwell
Best-selling author, speaker,
and leadership expert



The Secret

That night John met Debbie at the door when she got home.

“How was it?” he asked excitedly.

“I’m sorry I forgot to call you,” she replied in a stressed tone that spoke volumes about her day. “The meeting was very good. But when I got back to my office, the place was on fire, and I didn’t have a moment to call.”

“What advice did he give you?”

“None yet.”

“Nothing?” John asked in disbelief.

“Nope. He said he wanted to get to know me and give me a chance to know him. He said we would have time in the months ahead to find the answer to my question about what makes a great leader.”

“So you asked him?” John wondered.

“Yeah. He said it was an outstanding question, and we would explore it together later.”

“So you spent how long getting to know each other?”

“Almost an hour,” Debbie said.

“Wow! What did you learn?”

“I came to two conclusions based on today’s meeting,” Debbie said. “One, Jeff is a good listener. And two, I know very little about the people on my team.”

“What impressed you about him?” John asked.

“For one thing, he’s a great listener. It seemed as though he was constantly asking me questions that revolved around me and my perspective.”

John admitted that he didn’t know many people who exhibited that type of listening behavior. “In fact, it seems that most people are so busy thinking about what they want to say next, they really can’t hear what you are saying.”

“Jeff was different,” Debbie replied. “I think that’s why I said he’s a great listener.”

“When is your next meeting?”

“Next month. Between now and then, I’m going to work hard on my listening skills and see what I can learn about my people.”

“Sounds like a good plan,” said John.



The next morning Debbie went to the office determined to execute her plan. She started with Brenda. She thought this would be difficult initially—on two fronts. First, Debbie wondered whether she would be able to listen—truly listen. Second, she feared Brenda would be suspicious of her sudden change in behavior. But she had been so impressed by her time with Jeff that she decided to forge ahead anyway.

“Brenda, a few days ago you approached me to talk about a personal issue, and I told you I didn’t have time. I’m sorry I didn’t make the time. Can we have lunch together today?”

Brenda frowned. “Are you sure you’re available? If not, I understand. You’re always so busy and all.”

“Let’s do it today,” Debbie insisted.



Debbie did her best to listen to Brenda over lunch. She discovered that Brenda’s son had been ill for several weeks, and this had contributed to some of the performance issues Debbie had noticed. Brenda asked about the possibility of a more flexible schedule until her son was well. Debbie assured her that they could make this happen.

Debbie continued to work on her listening skills, determined to learn more about her people. Although this was her goal, she quickly became consumed by firefighting again and didn’t have much time for listening.

The days moved quickly due to the frantic pace in Debbie’s life. Even in the midst of her crazy workdays, she noticed that the flexible schedule was helping Brenda. But despite that improvement, the team’s overall performance still did not improve. The only ray of hope on the horizon was Debbie’s upcoming meeting with Jeff. In this next meeting, they would explore the answer to her question—and hopefully solve some of her team’s performance issues.



The day of her next mentoring meeting finally arrived. Debbie was pleased with herself for being punctual. As she had expected, Jeff arrived on time as well.

“How have things been going since our first meeting?” Jeff asked.

“Okay, I guess. My team still has performance issues. I’ve been working on becoming a better listener, and I’ve also tried to get to know more about my people as individuals.”

“All good things to do!” Jeff encouraged her with a smile. “Where should we start today?” he asked.

“I assumed there would be a formula or a format that we would follow,” Debbie said. “But if there’s not, we could start with my question.”

“Yes, your question about the secret of great leaders. As I told you at our last meeting, I think it’s a very good question. But before we go any further, why do you want to know?”

“So I can be a great leader,” Debbie replied without hesitation.

Jeff pulled a piece of paper from his desk. “This is your application to the mentorship program,” he said. “In reply to the question ‘What is a leader?’ you wrote that ‘a leader is a person in a position of authority who is responsible for the results of those under his or her direction.’”

Debbie nodded. “Seems pretty obvious to me,” she said.

True leadership has nothing to do with one’s level in the organization. . . . “In reality, Debbie, true leadership has nothing to do with one’s level in the organization. There are many individuals in the world who don’t hold leadership positions, yet they’re providing leadership all the time, just as there are many others who hold leadership positions, and they are not exerting much leadership at all.”

The latter case was painful to Debbie because she knew Jeff easily could be talking about her. She was in a *position* of leadership, but based on her team’s performance, she evidently was not providing much leadership.

Debbie hesitated for a moment then asked, “If it’s not position, what is leadership?”

“Let me explain it with a picture,” Jeff said as he walked over to the whiteboard. “Leadership is a lot like an iceberg. There are two primary components: what you can see above the waterline and what you can’t see, below the water. Let’s see if you remember this concept from your fifth grade science class. How much of an iceberg is usually visible above the water?”

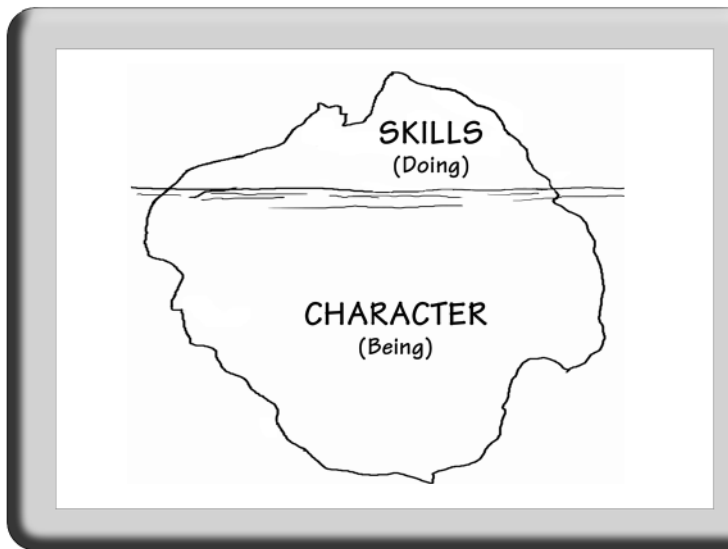
Debbie thought for a moment. “I think I was out the day we studied icebergs.” They both laughed. “I

would guess that less than 20 percent of an iceberg is visible above the water,” she said.

“That’s a good guess. The same principle applies to leadership. Leadership is more about what others don’t see than what they do see.”

Debbie was starting to feel lost in this explanation. “Keep talking,” she said.

“Let’s label what we’ve just discussed,” said Jeff as he began to draw on the whiteboard. “Below the water is the character of a leader. Above the water are the skills of a leader—what actions or activities he or she does. Another way to think about it is that leadership has two components: Being and Doing.”



“Think back a hundred years. When ships sailed in northern seas, many fell prey to icebergs. In most

of those tragedies, what sunk the ships? The part of the iceberg that was visible—or the part that was under the water, unseen?”

Debbie said, “It was probably what was under the water.”

“Exactly,” Jeff responded. “Character—or lack of it—is still the nemesis of most leaders in our world today. Skills are critical to effective leadership, but character is also. Many believe they could become effective leaders if they only had the skills. Others believe they can become great leaders if they could just develop their character. Both are wrong. It takes skills and character.”

“I see,” said Debbie.

“As an organization, where possible we select leaders with both character and skills. But if we have to choose between skills and character, we’ve made a fundamental decision on this issue. It’s the reason you’re here today.”

“And what is that decision?” Debbie asked.

“We will select men and women of character and develop their skills.”

Debbie made a few quick notes. *Okay, we’re getting close*, she thought. “So, Jeff, what’s the secret of great leaders?” she asked.

“The secret is, Great leaders **SERVE**.” Jeff paused to let his words sink in.

“*Serve?* What do you mean by that?” Debbie’s tone clearly reflected her disbelief. “Leaders don’t serve—they lead! And, what does that have to do with an iceberg?”

“The idea of SERVE fits nicely within the metaphor of the iceberg, both above and below the water line. Let me explain. A leader’s motivation or intention as a leader is a character issue. That’s below the surface. Leaders—regardless of their skill level—must continuously ask themselves, ‘Why am I leading?’ If I am leading with the intention to serve my people and my organization, I will behave in a fundamentally different way than if my motivation is self-serving. A key question you must continuously ask yourself is ‘Am I a self-serving leader or a serving leader?’”

“I’m confused,” Debbie said in a moment of complete candor.

“I’m having trouble translating this warm, fuzzy idea of SERVE back to my team. Assuming my motives are good and that I have the type of character that enables me to serve others, what am I supposed to *do* to lead well?”

“That’s where the idea of SERVE comes in above the water line in our picture of the iceberg. That’s also where we’re going to invest our time over the next few months. Together we’re going to explore how the idea of SERVE can and should impact what you *do* as a leader. I trust that those who selected

you to be a leader thought you had a servant heart. Otherwise, they would not have asked you to assume a leadership role. So through this mentoring process, our focus will be on your leadership skills and exploring ways you can serve your team and this organization on a day-by-day basis.”

“I appreciate your confidence in me, but serving still seems like a big idea. In fact, I think I could spend my lifetime trying to figure out how to serve.”

“You’re right. I think we just had a breakthrough!” Jeff exclaimed.

“What did I say? What did I break through?” Debbie asked.

“You said you could spend your entire life figuring this out. That’s exactly right. Great leaders don’t become great in a moment—or in a month or a year. They become great leaders one day at a time throughout their lifetimes. You’ll never finish. You’ll never completely arrive. You’ll constantly and continuously find new ways to serve, and every time you do, your leadership skills will improve and you’ll become a better leader.”

“This seems overwhelming. There must be millions of things a leader can do to serve.”

“You’re right. There are millions, but there is also a short list.”

“A short list?” There was a degree of hope in Debbie’s voice.

“Yes, I believe there are five essential ways in which every great leader serves.”

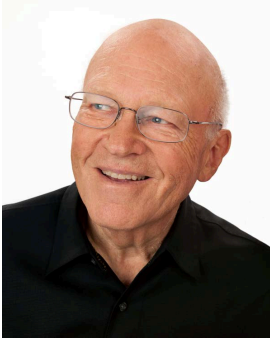
Debbie grabbed her pen. “What are they?”

“We’ll address them one at a time, beginning with our next meeting,” Jeff said. “Today, I want to give you your first assignment. Between now and our next meeting, see how you can serve those you lead. Not just big things, but in all the little ways as well. Keep a list, and we’ll talk about it next time we meet.”

Debbie left Jeff’s office with many unanswered questions, but she also had an intuitive sense that she would never view her role as a leader in the same way again.

About the Authors

KEN BLANCHARD



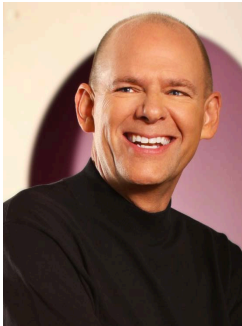
Few people have impacted the day-to-day management of people and companies more than Ken Blanchard. A prominent, gregarious, sought-after author, speaker, and business consultant, Dr. Blanchard is universally characterized by his friends, colleagues, and clients as one of the most insightful, powerful, and compassionate people in the business world today.

From his phenomenal best-selling book, *The One Minute Manager* (coauthored with Spencer Johnson)—which has sold more than thirteen million copies and remains on best-seller lists—to the library of books coauthored with outstanding practitioners—*Raving Fans*, *Gung Ho!*, *Leadership and the One Minute Manager*, *Whale Done!*, and many others—Ken’s impact as a writer is extraordinary and far-reaching. Ken is the chief spiritual officer (CSO) of The Ken Blanchard Companies, an international management training and consulting firm that he and his wife, Dr. Marjorie Blanchard, founded in 1979 in San Diego, California. He is also a visiting lecturer at his alma mater, Cornell University, where he is

a trustee emeritus of the board of trustees. Ken is the cofounder of Lead Like Jesus, an organization committed to helping people become servant leaders around the world.

Ken and Margie, his wife of more than fifty years, live in San Diego. Their son Scott, his wife, Madeleine, their daughter Debbie, and Margie's brother, Tom, hold key positions in The Ken Blanchard Companies.

MARK MILLER



Mark began writing about a decade ago when he was fortunate to team up with Ken Blanchard to write *The Secret: What Great Leaders Know and Do*. In 2011, he released *The Secret of Teams*, outlining the key principles that enable some teams to outperform others. *Great Leaders Grow:*

Becoming a Leader for Life came next in 2011. His latest book, *The Heart of Leadership*, was released in the fall of 2013. With more than 600,000 of his books in print, Mark has been surprised by the response and delighted to serve leaders through his writing.

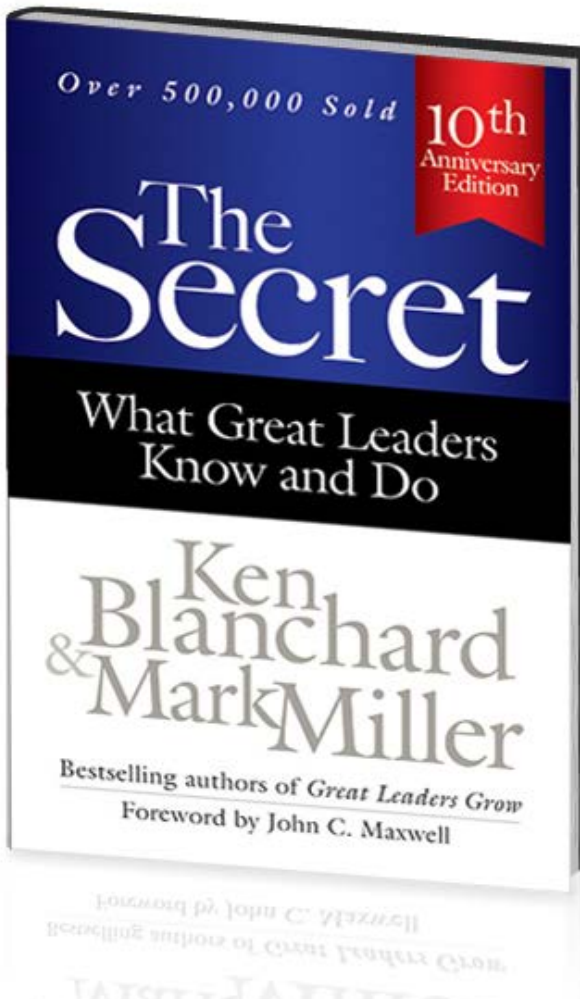
In addition to writing, Mark loves speaking to leaders. Over the years, he has traveled extensively around the world teaching for numerous

international organizations. His theme is always the same: encouraging and equipping leaders.

Mark also sells chicken. He started his Chick-fil-A career working as an hourly team member back in 1977. In 1978, he joined the corporate staff working in the warehouse and mailroom. Since then, he's provided leadership for Corporate Communications, Field Operations, Quality and Customer Satisfaction, and Training and Development. Today he serves as the Vice President for Organizational Effectiveness. During his time with Chick-fil-A, annual sales have grown to over \$5 billion, and the company now has more than 1,700 restaurants in 39 states and the District of Columbia.

Mark has been married to his high school sweetheart, Donna, for more than 30 years and they have two sons, a daughter-in-law, and a grand-dog named Jackson. He keeps a full schedule and lives an active life. He works hard to stay fit and also loves photography—he has been privileged to shoot in some of the world's hardest-to-reach places, including Mount Kilimanjaro, Everest Base Camp, Antarctica, and the jungles of Rwanda.

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