



Press release

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A few surprises as the UK's leaders name the reading that inspired them

A new list of reading recommendations by leaders from across the UK has been launched in order to provide a source of inspiration for anyone looking for challenging or stimulating reading. This unique list has been unveiled as part of the new Common Purpose 360 graduate community and includes recommendations from Charles Handy, management writer, Henry Stewart, founder and Chief Executive of Happy, Prue Leith, restaurateur and cookery writer, Bill Knight, Deputy Chairman of Council, Lloyd's of London and John Inge, the Bishop of Worcester.

Management books feature strongly in the list but there are also some surprising inclusions such as *If this is a man* by Primo Levi which was recommended by Tim Smit, Chief Executive of The Eden Project, *The State vs. Nelson Mandela: The Trial That Changed South Africa* by Joel Joffe which was suggested by Philip Kolvin, Barrister and Chairman, of the Crystal Palace Campaign, and Julia Middleton, Chief Executive, Common Purpose's recommendation of *Candide* by François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire).

Richard Charkin, Executive Director, Bloomsbury Publishing found *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller inspirational because: "I first read it aged fifteen when I still thought the world might be rational. It helped me recognise the absurdity of organisations, structures, rules and strategies!"

The list doesn't just include books, several speeches were cited as influential, with Sir David Varney, Permanent Secretary to the HR Treasury recommending the *I've been to the mountain top* speech that Martin Luther King gave in 1963 and Tarek Ben Halim, founder and Trustee of the Arab Learning Initiative recommending *The Fringe Benefits of Failure, and the Importance of Imagination*, the Harvard University commencement address that J.K. Rowling gave in June this year.

Common Purpose 360 is the community for people who have completed a Common Purpose programme, anywhere in the world. It enables graduates to find, meet and exchange ideas with each other on a local and international scale: across programme years, local boundaries and national borders. It is a 25,000 strong, growing community with considerable reach, exceptional diversity and a huge range of skills, interests and leadership experiences.

The full list of recommendations is below along with the reason why they made the recommendation:

Professor Charles Handy, Management writer

The Mystery of Capital by Hernando De Soto (2000)

"De Soto's book shows that there is an enormous amount of untapped wealth among the poor, the problem is that they cannot leverage it in the way richer people do because their assets - land, buildings, or businesses - do not have proper legal titles. So obvious but so unnoticed, until now."

Prue Leith, restaurateur and cookery writer

Overschooled but Undereducated: Society's Failure to Understand Adolescence by John Abbott with Heather MacTaggart (2008)

"He draws on the latest brain science and on ancient traditions of small communities to develop the premise that adolescents need to take risks, find out through experience rather than theory, have a full, challenging, engaged and active time if their brains are to develop into reasoning adult ones and not to be stuck in the permanent childhood of dependence, caution, and clone-like acceptance. The potential is there, but our education system (which tends to disapprove of rather than take advantage of adolescence) prevents its flowering."

James Ramsbotham, Chief Executive, North East Chamber of Commerce

The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference by Malcolm Gladwell (2000)

"Anita Roddick said: 'If you think you're too small to make a difference, you have never been to bed with a mosquito'. This book convinces you to keep trying."

Henry Stewart, Chief Executive, Happy

Maverick: The Success Behind the World's Most Unusual Workplace by Ricardo Semler (1993)

"A radical and inspirational approach to managing, based on trust and freedom. The inspiration behind Happy's approach to management. I like it so much I have given away over 400 copies!"

The Customer Comes Second: Put Your People First and Watch 'em Kick Butt by Hal Rosenbluth and Diane McFerrin Peters (2002)

"Because the staff come first. 'Hire nice people and treat them well' is the simple message at the core of this book from the company rated the best in the US for customer service."

Tim Smit, Chief Executive, The Eden Project

If this is a man by Primo Levi (1947)

"His searing account of being incarcerated in Auschwitz and its effect on him and his neighbours. What should be a depressing book asks fundamental questions about dignity and the power of hope. Seriously, I have bought and given away more copies of this book than any other and no one has been other than deeply moved by its reading. It is also...short!"

Julia Middleton, Chief Executive, Common Purpose

Candide by François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire) (1759)

"I found this book inspirational because it blew away existing thinking at the time, and I believe it is very important to challenge current thinking, whether it is 1759 or 2008. The character of Pangloss, is the one that resonates with me the most, as he is optimistic and fair, which is summed up in his phrase "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds". Although I find the book inspiring, I strongly disagree with its conclusion that "we must cultivate our garden". I would conclude the opposite, that we should look beyond our own zones, be they comfortable or not, and see how they and we impact on the world beyond them, and how we can build constructive relationships between the two."

Martin Moore, Director, Media Standards Trust

Flat Earth News - An award-winning reporter exposes falsehood, distortion and propaganda in the global media by Nick Davies (2008)

"More like three books than one, Davies' 'Flat Earth News' is eye-opening, frightening and jaw dropping. He describes, from the inside, how news is increasingly 'manufactured' from public relations material and how original on-the-ground journalism is disappearing. Though there is plenty to take issue with in Davies' book, as an alarm call to the decline of a critical aspect of democratic society, it's hard to beat."

Bridget McConnell, Chief Executive, Culture and Sport Glasgow

Re-thinking the Social Impact of the Arts: A Critical-Historical Review by Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, 2006 (Centre for Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick, Research Paper no. 9. - to be published as a book later in 2008 by Palgrave/Macmillan)

"This paper sets contemporary cultural policy debates in a historical context, eliciting new perspectives about the origins and nature of ideas we mistakenly think are modern constructs; such as the current debate about the intrinsic vs instrumental value of arts and culture. This book demonstrates that new insights and understanding can be found as much in the nuances of, and reflections on, policy, culture and history, as in epiphanic events and ideas. It affirms the value to be found in deeper and richer study, understanding and appreciation of what we think we already know."

Richard Charkin, Executive Director, Bloomsbury Publishing

Catch-22 by Joseph Heller (1961)

"I first read it aged fifteen when I still thought the world might be rational. It helped me recognise the absurdity of organisations, structures, rules and strategies!"

Eric Thomas, Vice-Chancellor, University of Bristol

Silence by Shusako Endo (1966)

"He made me revisit my values and clarified the complex beauty of the human condition. After finishing 'Silence' and 'The Samurai' I stood still and thought long and deep."

Stephen Platten, Bishop of Wakefield

Never Again: Britain 1945 -1951 by Peter Hennessy (1992)

"Peter Hennessy's first volume in his Social History of England focuses on the work of the 1945-51 Labour Government and the establishment of the Welfare State, so, 'never again poor housing, never again will people fear for the cost of medical treatment etc etc'. Hennessy sets this in the context of Churchill's legacy; there is a generosity to his account and it paints the canvas marvellously for the world that we have inherited, sharpening our perception as we strive to build a healthy contemporary society in twenty-first century Britain."

Diana Parker, Chair, Withers LLP

Arabian Sands by Wilfred Thesiger (1959)

"This book is Thesiger's account of crossing the empty quarter of the Arabian desert with camels, dates and a group of men he got together as guides. It was an era of primitive navigation and primitive feuding. Even just the opening pages are an interesting study in leadership without authority and the importance of leadership as being a common journey the experience of which can be as significant as arriving at the journey's end."

Sir David Varney, Permanent Secretary, HR Treasury

I've been to the mountain top speech by Martin Luther King (3 April, 1968)

"Delivered the night before Dr. King was murdered. Dr. King retells the parable of The Good Samaritan. He explained that the priest and the Levite passed by lest they be attacked. The Good Samaritan asked himself what would happen to the injured man if he didn't stop."

Jonathon Porritt, Chairman, Forum for the Future

Limits to Growth by Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III (1972)

"Back in 1972, the Club of Rome's 'Limits to Growth' report stirred up a massive controversy about the overall viability of our contemporary model of economic progress – based on year-on-year exponential economic growth. The report has been comprehensively updated three times since then – and the latest version (2006) is as relevant, hard-hitting and important as the first version in 1972. Politicians and business people are still very uncomfortable about the concept of 'Limits to Growth' – but getting one's head around this is still the single most important determinant of making any kind of progress in the future".

Geoff Mulgan, Director, The Young Foundation

Systems of Survival by Jane Jacobs (1992)

"Jacobs was a huge influence on how we think about cities, warning against the hubris of generations of planners. But it's this, one of her later books that I like most. It contains a remarkable amount of wisdom about how societies and economies work in the form of a conversation between a group of friends. It's also a powerful argument against the current fashion for blurring the boundaries between sectors."

Sue Stapley, Director, Quiller Consultants

Public Relations Disasters - Talespin, inside stories and lessons learnt, by Gerry McCusker (2004)

"I think everyone in any position of authority should read it. It demonstrates compellingly how almost every single major public relations disaster around the globe - and every reader will recall many of them - could have been avoided by planning, foresight and better communications! If, of course, everyone did read and action the lessons learnt, I'd be out of work!"

Philip Kolvin, Barrister, Chairman, Crystal Palace Campaign

The State vs. Nelson Mandela: The Trial That Changed South Africa by Joel Joffe (2007)

"As a successful lawyer from the ruling white elite, Joel Joffe did not need to risk his life to dissuade the court from taking Mandela's. His careful dispassionate book exemplifies a disciplined intellectual at work, subordinating, or perhaps channelling, the intense anger he must have felt to the exigencies of the cause. Every great leader surrounds himself with great strategists. Joel Joffe stepped up to the mark."

Tarek Ben Halim, founder and Trustee, Arab Learning Initiative

The Fringe Benefits of Failure, and the Importance of Imagination, the J.K. Rowling Harvard University Commencement Address (June 2008)

"It is difficult to be specific about how a speech impacted me other than to say these sort of things stick in your head and over time somehow impact one's behaviour. For example,

Rowling's focus on lessons learned from failure is quite an interesting and unusual angle that I am sure will, over time, somehow impact my behaviour."

Tony Gallagher, Professor, School of Education, Queen's University Belfast

The End of Education: redefining the value of school by Neil Postman (1996)

"Postman invites us to re-imagine the purpose of education and the qualities of citizenship we want our young people to gain from their schooling. He reminds us that education is about a whole lot more than the accumulation of qualifications. He challenges us to think critically and creatively about the social purpose of schooling, and about how we can encourage young people to become engaged, active citizens of the future."

Samantha Mant, Head of Development, Bristol Zoo Gardens (and National Wildlife Conservation Park)

Beyond Authority – Leadership in a Changing World by Julia Middleton (2007)

"This is my most inspiring recent book on leadership outside the norm."

Vince Mc Ginlay, former Supply Chain Director and Textile Technology Director at Marks and Spencer

The Jack Welch Lexicon of Leadership: Over 250 Terms, Concepts, Strategies & Initiatives of the Legendary Leader by Jeffrey A. Krames (2001)

"This book gives an insight into some of the drivers that Welch identified and the techniques he used which contributed to his then success. I wouldn't suggest this book is a blueprint for how to do it, but it does help to understand better others perspectives and approaches which in turn help us formulate strategies for success in a global economy."

David Walker, Editor, Guardian PUBLIC magazine

Unjust Rewards, by Polly Toynbee and David Walker (2008)

"I know it's not done to recommend your own book but *Unjust Rewards*, by Polly Toynbee and myself, takes on the conventional wisdom that there is nothing to be done about the debilitating growth in inequality in the UK in recent years - and specifically addresses the failures of corporate governance that have allowed boardroom remuneration to get so out of line with executive performance. We conducted focus groups with high earners to explore their attitudes towards taxation and social action and, as we say in the book, were left puzzled and dismayed by what we call social myopia - the invisibility to high earners of so many of their fellow citizens - and mutual ignorance about incomes and conditions of life. This book was written to jolt the thinking of the corporate class and seems, with the Tories' new concern about broken Britain, to have hit its moment."

Madi Sharma, Managing Director, The Ethnic Trail

Think And Grow Rich by Napoleon Hill (1937)

"I recommend this one book to every person I mentor. Without vision and focus, and without purpose in life, you will never find happiness or satisfaction in your work or home. Not surprisingly every successful person globally uses the same technique to achieve his/her goals. This book takes you step by step to personal wealth (for wealth do NOT read money!) and reiterates that there are no barriers to achieving success, only yourself."

Toby Hyam, Managing Director, Creative Space Management

The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Volumes 1 & 2 by Fernand Braudel (1949)

"These amazing books tells you just how sophisticated the renaissance businesses of Europe were, as they opened up new markets across the known and emerging new worlds of the 16th century. Braudel's extraordinary analysis of the decline of the European city

states and the rise of the nation state and the brilliantly innovative Genoese and Florentine business empires that stretched from Yorkshire to the emerging spice ports are inspiration for the globally distributed businesses of today. It puts risk and reward and dealing with natural and social disasters into an entirely fresh context. From the challenges of managing the vast resources and manpower on a cargo ship or galley, to the logistics and diplomacy required to offset quixotic royal patronage with profit: it makes you appreciate the incredible scope of their management skills without any of our technological and social advantages."

Walter Menzies, Chief Executive, Mersey Basin Campaign

Capital of the Mind - How Edinburgh Changed the World by James Buchan (2003)

"It's grim down south and it's cool up north, and yet the UK is disabled by the parochialism of the metropolitan glitterati. What makes cities great? James Buchan's *Capital of the Mind - How Edinburgh Changed the World* is a gripping account of a small city's journey from disaster to daydream."

Brain Hanna, Commissioner, Sustainable Development Commission

Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature by Linda Lear (1997)

"Rachel Carson was the heroine of my student days. Her book, *Silent Spring* (1962), educated, inspired and awakened me and many others to the issue of ecological balance and our need to understand and respect the interaction of all living things in the environment in which we live. As Lear states in the Prologue to her biography of Carson: "She could not stand idly by and say nothing when human existence itself was endangered". Rachel Carson wrote her seminal book, "Silent Spring", in 1962. We should all have paid more heed to its central message."

Kevin Baird, Director, Irish Heritage Trust

The Lost Gardens of Helligan by Tim Smit (1999)

Eden by Tim Smit (2002)

"These books are Tim Smit's personal account of his role in creating these two wonderful places. They make a refreshing read for those of us a little tired of 'business books'. Firstly the accounts make a tremendous read in themselves however I'm recommending them because, while Smit doesn't focus on the leadership or management issues, if you also read them with a leadership/management eye there is terrific food for thought and discussion within the stories."

The Power of Focus: What the Worlds Greatest Achievers Know about The Secret of Financial Freedom and Success by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, Les Hewitt (2000)

"A time management book that has been around for some time that keeps it all very simple – A really useful tool without jargon that I found helpful when demands greatly exceeded capacity!"

Garvis D. Snook, CEO, ROK

Who moved my cheese? Who Moved My Cheese? An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life by Spencer Johnson (1998)

"I am not a great one for management books as I usually find them overly long and once I have consumed the themes in the first chapter or two I get bored and do not have the time or inclination to follow through to the end. One, however, that I have used extensively and given out copies of is this as I find it a very simple way of helping people to understand both the need to change and not to fear it."

John Inge, Bishop of Worcester

Becoming Human by Jean Vanier (1998)

"Jean Vanier, founder of the l'Arche communities and in particular, a book which looks at the liberation of the human heart. This recommendation derives from my conviction that if any

leader is to be effective he or she must work hard on the inner journey as well as try to do the job."

Martin Kinsella, Chief Executive, P3

The Report of the Inquiry into the Care and Treatment of Christopher Clunis by Jean H. Ritchie, Donald Dick, Richard Lingham (1994)

"This is a narrative that describes how in the early 1990s a socially excluded individual was serially failed by a wide range of agencies and services who might properly have been expected to serve him (and his unfortunate victim) better. The report is widely regarded as the blueprint against which all other inquiry reports should be measured. The question I seek to ask by recommending the report is: have the challenges of public service multi agency, pan sector policy, organisation and management raised by the recommendations contained in the report been addressed over the last fourteen years? The answer as evidenced by the publication of two Inquiry Reports in July 2008, both containing stories laced with echoes of Clunis, is sadly no. My second question is given that there are 26 mental health homicide cases currently under review in London all of which according to NHS guidance require an Inquiry and Report, each costing up to £1 million plus one of which is about to commence, what needs to happen to break this ongoing cycle of despair that is extravagantly wasteful both in terms of its financial and human cost?"

Vij Randeniya, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, West Midlands Fire Service

Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't by Jim Collins (2001)

"In a world of sound bites, 'celebrity' and the need to satisfy short term performance targets the notion that a longer term perspective with less flash bang and a gritty resolve to do the right thing may actually be the better way presents a paradox for managers who may at the very least be seeking just to survive in a rapidly changing world. Such a challenge comes from this excellent book. Collins and his research team set out to identify companies that had moved from just being good, to great, and continued their growth for at least 15 years. During a five year project the team identified three phases that preceded the breakthrough to becoming 'great' – the first phase includes the need for level 5 leadership. For those seeking a competitive edge or self-actualization the descriptors of a level 5 leader present an essential but also potentially uncomfortable challenge to received wisdom. The book is particularly appealing because its conclusions are based upon well-designed research and a thoughtful interpretation of the results; there is none of the creative speculation that characterises so many other books about management. For those not in the for profit sector, the team have produced *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* which extends the research outcomes into other important sectors. The accompanying website includes a diagnostic that will help you to determine where your organisation is on the journey to becoming great and your personal position on the journey to becoming a level 5 leader. Are you a hedgehog or a fox?"

Andrew Morris, Director, National Educational Research Forum

The Stuff of Thought: Language as a Window into Human Nature by Steven Pinker (2007)

"It presents scientifically derived evidence (and witty anecdotes) about how language reveals information about the structure of our thoughts. He shows how phrases like "he went from bad to worse" suggest that our ways of thinking are based on fundamental concepts, like movement, cause, space and time which evolved for a much more primitive stage in our evolution. These are often unsuitable for today and this affects political, social and behavioural problems of the day. Pinker suggests that education is a crucial element in freeing people from the constraint of inappropriate structures of thought."

Mark Henderson, Chief Executive, Mark Henderson Associates

Maverick: The Success Behind the World's Most Unusual Workplace by Ricardo Semler (1993)

"A truly inspirational book about radical workplace democracy. Semler shows that trusting and believing in your team really can bring results and is an absolute lesson in how to be that truly authentic person."

Charles Kessler, Chairman, Kesslers

Blink by Malcolm Gladwell (2005)

"Blink, the seminal book by Malcolm Gladwell, is one of those rare pieces of work. It is an easy read, it is interesting, and stimulates new thought and approach. The phrase used with the book is "The Power of Thinking Without Thinking" and the book clearly shows how this is done. We receive millions of pieces of information through the senses everyday. Why is it that we remember a very small percentage, and immediately discard the others? Learning this lesson can be enormously helpful in getting messages through to people later. It's ideal information – informative; educational; practical. I look forward to the next!"

Adam Sampson, Director, Shelter

The Tyranny of Numbers by David Boyle (2002)

"At a time when we are - quite rightly - seeking to measure the good we do rather than simply assert that we do it, it is worth being reminded of the limitations and dangers of measurement itself."

Tony Howell, Strategic Director - Children Young People & Families, Birmingham City Council

The World is Flat: A Brief history of the Twenty-first Century by Thomas L. Friedman (2005 - updated 2007)

"Like others, I would heartily endorse anything by Malcom Gladwell or John Abbott but Friedman's book describes in clear language how the global connected world has unfolded and helps us make sense of this new environment. Describing the impact on world economics, relationships between nations, implications for business and education and the need for us all to adapt to this new flat world - not least, the way young people already inhabit this place - is essential reading for all of us."

Howard Raynor, Managing Director, World Class Service Ltd

Bringing Out the Best in People by Aubrey C Daniels (2003)

"The yawning gap between what gets said and what gets done can leave us wondering whether we can ever really improve team performance. In this book Aubrey Daniels sets out a clear straightforward science based view about how to get the best out of people. Daniels sets out a convincing case from the field of behavioural analysis so that we can finally move on from this year's fad to a real understanding of how to create outstanding performance based on science."

Lessons in Service from Charlie Trotter by Edmund Lawler (2001)

"Tired of "OK UK", tired of average, had enough of "alright"? Charlie Trotter is a chef obsessed by service excellence in his Chicago restaurant, this book and its partner; "Lessons in Excellence" provide a glimpse of the pursuit of perfection. We have become familiar with celebrity chef's but what about the service we actually encounter, can we do more? Lawler's book is an inspiration to anyone who has that nagging feeling that things could be better."

Mich Stevenson, Chairman, Spenbeck Limited

Anyone Can Do It: My Story by Duncan Bannatyne (2007)

"My choice of book for aspiring entrepreneurs would be *Anyone Can Do It* by Duncan Bannatyne of Dragon's Den fame - a man who started with nothing and who has worked his way through business to become an extremely successful entrepreneur. There are many lessons and messages for everyone in his book."

Jane Earl, Director, Assets Recovery Agency

The Spirit of Success by Norman Drummond (2004)

"It is a very good bridge between the hard disciplines of the world of work and the values driven parts of life, and it encourages me to remember the importance of wholeness and being the same at work as I am elsewhere."

Bill Knight, Deputy Chairman of Council, Lloyd's of London

The Portable Hannah Arendt by Hannah Arendt and Peter Baehr (2003)

"Hannah Arendt was one of the great philosophers of the 20th century and her work illuminates the human condition. These essays and extracts are a good introduction. The book contains her essay *Reflections on Little Rock*. This is Arendt swimming against the current, arguing against the forced integration of education in America. A Jew forced to flee Hitler's Germany to the United States, Arendt was profoundly affected by racism and a passionate believer in equality under the law, but she also believed that forced integration crosses the boundary which separates the state from the individual, and she hated the idea of using children to fight our battles. The essay was very unpopular in her circle but it shows the quality of her thought, the independence of her spirit and her unconditional belief in the rights of the individual. In her preliminary remarks she says, "I should like to make it clear that as a Jew I take my sympathy for the cause of.....all oppressed or under-privileged people for granted and should appreciate it if the reader did likewise". They didn't."

Professor Brenda Gourley, Vice Chancellor, The Open University

We Think by Charles Leadbeater (2008)

"All businesses need to understand the new Web generation (Web2.0) and how it can be harnessed and exploited. This book gives a unique insight."

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For further information please contact:

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Notes for Editors:

- Common Purpose is an independent not-for-profit leadership organisation that aims to give leaders the inspiration, knowledge and connections they need to produce positive change - in the communities and workplaces. Common Purpose operates throughout the UK and worldwide in France, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, India, Ireland, South Africa, Sweden, The Netherlands and Turkey. For further information visit www.commonpurpose.org.uk