

BEST LEADERSHIP BOOKS OF THE 21st CENTURY



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Introduction

What are the best books on leadership, management and ministry published since the turn of the millennium? MODEM invited a panel of nine people drawn from different backgrounds to consider this question. They invited nominations via MODEM's website and by email. They received 136 nominations and began the task of converting these to lists of ten books in each of two categories: those covering leadership in general, and those focusing on Christian leadership. MODEM is most grateful to panel members for their contributions (see p15 for a list of members).

The panel received nominations for books published before 2000, including two by Charles Handy, Henri Nouwen's *In the Name of Jesus*, and Eugene Petersen's *Contemplative Pastor*. In line with MODEM's mission of promoting dialogue, some authors were nominated in both categories: John Adair, Marcus Buckingham, Joe Jaworski, Peter Senge, Meg Wheatley.

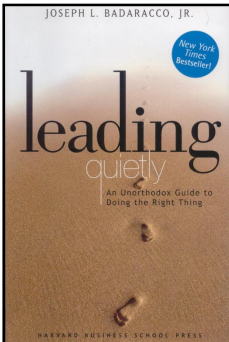
In addition to the best ten books in each category, the panel identified a further five books that were shortlisted. No such list can be definitive, but we hope that the conversations prompted around the panel will continue more widely. The panel has certainly enjoyed, and learned from, the discussions that have brought us to this point.

We now offer this to a wider audience. Let us know your thoughts: email bestbooks@modem-uk.org, twitter [@modemhub](https://twitter.com/modemhub).

Criteria

- Relevant to one or more of MODEM's areas of focus: leadership, management and ministry
- Practically useful
- Intellectually engaging
- Represent a range of views and possibilities
- May address individual or organizational situations
- Encourage reflection from the reader on their past or present situation
- First published after 1 January 2000
- Readily available through bookshops or online.

General Leadership



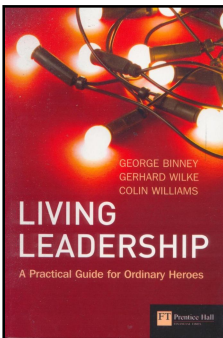
Joseph L Badaracco, *Leading Quietly: An Unorthodox Guide to Doing the Right Thing*, Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

Badaracco is a Harvard-based authority on business ethics. *Leading Quietly* emphasises the importance of small events, of messy everyday challenges dealt with by people working away from the limelight.

Badaracco describes how his thoughts on quiet leadership have their roots in a MBA course he taught where students discussed works of literature. From

Macbeth to Death of a Salesman, two patterns caught his attention. First, characters who set out to be great often end up disappointed or bitter; secondly, unassuming minor characters make a careful and sensitive contribution. Not that Badaracco is against heroes: Albert Schweitzer and James Burke of Johnson & Johnson get honourable mentions.

For those who like simple slogans, Badaracco makes uncomfortable reading: chapter titles include Trust Mixed Motives and Bend the Rules. He concludes with three 'all too ordinary' quiet virtues: restraint, modesty and tenacity.

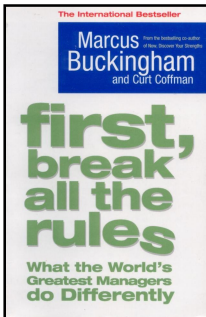


George Binney, Gerhard Wilke & Colin Williams, *Living Leadership: A Practical Guide for Ordinary Heroes*, FT-Prentice Hall, 2005 [2nd edn 2009].

This balances credible data and practical application (the authors cover both the academic and practical worlds). With European authors it is a book you can instantly relate to. It provides plenty of leadership and managerial principles.

A key point is that leadership is not simply about leaders (their qualities or lack of them) or followers (their pliancy or awkwardness) but rather the product of their interactions in a specific context - one of those common sense statements it takes years of experience to make. Read through, then keep it to come back to.

Recognising the pressures on leaders today, it acknowledges that we can't always work to ideals and should aim to be 'good enough' leaders and managers, not perfect ones. It stresses the 'art of the possible', not assuming you can always, or even mostly, be a 'transformational' leader.

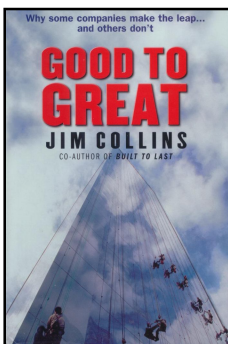


Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman, *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*, Simon & Schuster, 1999.

This book results from two Gallup surveys over a 25-year period, involving a million employees and managers from a range of companies, industries and countries. The first survey asked what talented employees needed from their organisations. The answer? Great managers. So the second study explored how great managers find, focus and keep

talented employees.

This study identified 12 questions that measured the strength of a workplace and the core elements needed to find, focus and keep talented employees. It found that people leave managers, not companies. Affirmative answers correlated with higher levels of productivity, profit, retention, and customer satisfaction. UK-born, US-based Buckingham's first (and best) book highlights four 'keys' to what the best managers do differently. It provides plenty of material for managers to work through with their teams. And, Yes, the publication date is correct.

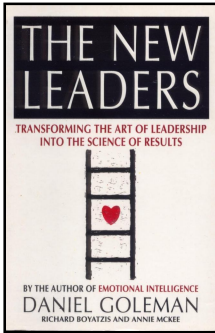


Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't*, Random House, 2001.

Something of a 'Marmite' choice. Many of us loved it; some hated it. Whether you find yourself saying 'Yes', 'Yes, but ...', 'not sure ...', or 'Come on ..!' this is a book that will re-pay careful reading. Warm to his 'homely' style or not, Jim Collins' arguments as to what makes an organisation sustainable are based on a huge amount of research and should be taken seriously.

Not just limited to the 'bottom line', he suggests the winning formulae he has identified work as well with the social sector (and proves this in a follow-up monograph).

This book could be read with profit by anyone in a leadership role - if for no other reason than for Collins' definition of 'level 5 leadership' – 'a combination of personal humility and professional will.' Something for us all to aspire to.

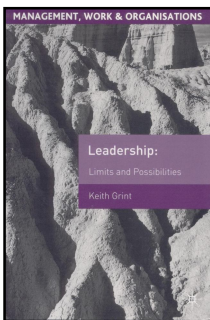


Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis & Annie McKee, *The New Leader: Transforming the Art of Leadership to the Science of Success*, Little, Brown, 2002 [= *Primal Leadership*].

Remember those times when you have experienced a twinge of delight or dismay, suspecting that your emotions probably, though unintentionally, had a decisive impact on the performance of the people around you? With factual evidence, this book will confirm those suspicions. Particularly if you hold a senior position.

If you are a little daunted by the stark acknowledgement of just how contagious your emotions really are, then you will find *The New Leaders* a very important and a very useful read. Drawing on decades of analysis, Goleman goes on to identify which emotions are most contagious, which are most beneficial, and what mechanisms you can tap into for a positive, healthy and successful organisation.

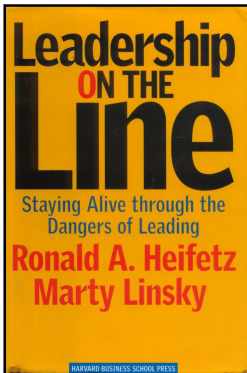
Factual and practical, the book will help you explore two of the fundamentals of effective leadership: awareness of your impact on others and managing your impact intentionally.



Keith Grint, *Leadership: Limits and Possibilities*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

Grint is Professor at Warwick Business School. His book – not his longest – includes observations from RAF training courses. For those with a stereotyped view of the armed services, he has some surprising insights. Two ideas, in particular, contribute to the debate about leadership and corporate culture.

- Constructive dissent. Grint recalls how Admiral Sir Cloudisley Shovel in 1707 allegedly hanged a sailor who suggested the fleet was heading for some rocks... on which the fleet then foundered. He introduces the mirror image, destructive consent, for which Marks and Spencer in the late 1990s provides a good example. Constructive dissenters are not always welcome: we prefer to assimilate or ignore their distinctive contribution.
- Inverse learning. Grint notes how groups learn. Using the example of parents learning from their children, he notes how the follower can be teacher to the leader.

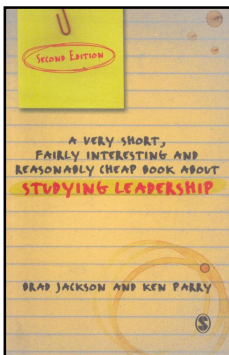


Ronald A Heifetz & Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

Heifetz, who is based at Harvard's John F Kennedy School of Government, established a reputation through recognising the difference between what he described as technical and adaptive challenges for leaders. We see many challenges as the former, whereas they are often the latter. He also invoked the memorable image of a busy leader needing to

move to the balcony to get a view of what is happening on the dance floor.

Here he teams up with Harvard colleague Linsky to examine some of the personal challenges for leaders, especially successful ones. From politicians to pastors, they offer examples of the thin line between success and failure, and especially of the personal challenges that lurk close to the surface. The book includes religious imagery – body and soul, sacred heart – as part of its hard-hitting practical advice.

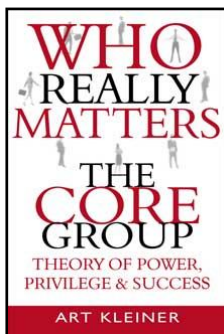


Brad Jackson & Ken Parry, *A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book about Studying Leadership*, Sage, 2007 [2nd edn 2011].

Fed up with doorstep-sized books about leadership? Then this is the one for you. It's pocket-sized and costs less than a couple of CDs. Designed to be read on a train or plane, it's only 150 pages long, beautifully written, scholarly *and* entertaining. The authors are academics in Australia [Parry, at Bond University] and New Zealand [Jackson, at University

of Auckland], and bring a strong sense of theory and practice.

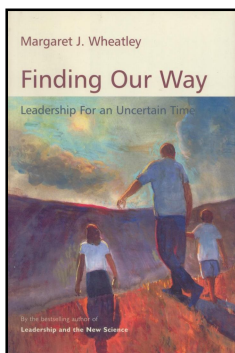
Though it's short, it will leave you with a clear sense of how contested leadership is: from Great Man theory, through attempts to identify traits and behaviours, up to contemporary perspectives on critical and distributed leadership. Why buy and read it? Because it does all that the title promises, especially the 'fairly interesting' part, and much more. Invest in it, and it'll be a wonderful companion for a long time.



Art Kleiner, *Who Really Matters: The Core Group Theory of Power, Privilege and Success*, Doubleday, 2003.

Kleiner brilliantly explains the phenomenon of group leader(s) seemingly functioning like a magnet underneath paper scattered with iron filings. Core Group Theory explains why organisations can act 'illogically': it reminds leaders to beware of their role's magnetism. Core group members are subject to various dynamics: three can be especially distorting if leaders are unaware.

- Amplification. Cues from the leader are distorted. Moodiness can be interpreted as displeasure, a frown can be misinterpreted and amplified.
- Facsimile. Followers develop a mental version of their leader as the yardstick in decision-making: what would the boss want us to do? If the leader is remote or unclear, guesswork may lead to poor decisions.
- Priorities. If a leader pays attention to one particular metric or behaviour, the organisation morphs into position behind it. Paying attention to wrong things diverts organisational energy.



Margaret J Wheatley, *Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time*, Berrett-Koehler, 2005.

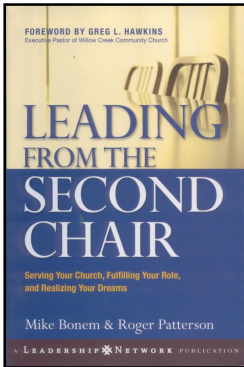
Meg Wheatley offers a breath of fresh air, even for those not in formal leadership. Read it, savour it, and see where it takes you. In her gentle, sometimes even poetic way, Wheatley is forcefully arguing for a radical shift in how we view, and hence how we operate within, our organisations.

We suspect it will be particularly helpful if:

- You have been disillusioned by the tendency to view organisations as machines, and people as cogs in those machines.
- You wish people would communicate and pull together more.
- You feel there is a great deal of untapped potential and enthusiasm in yourself and others.
- You want to confidently take a more compassionate, emotionally aware approach.

At the very least the book will give you energising food for thought. It may even lead you in bold new directions.

Christian Leadership

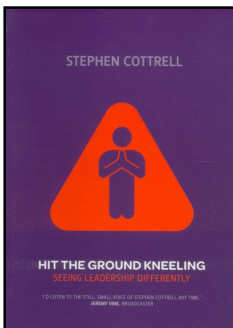


Mike Bonem & Roger Patterson, *Leading from the Second Chair*, Jossey-Bass, 2005.

This book, from the respected Jossey-Bass corporation in San Francisco, presents that most useful thing, an interesting new metaphor for thinking about leadership. The authors are convinced that leadership is most challenging when you occupy the ‘second chair’ in a church organization. Just as in an orchestra or band, it can be easier to be the person standing up and making the most noise, whereas the ‘second fiddle’ player has to be a much better

listener, more flexible, and generally be willing to help the first chair leader look or sound good!

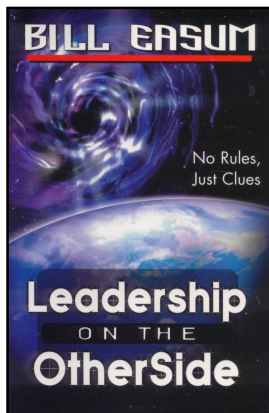
The true beauty of this book is that it speaks directly to all of us who have occupied that second chair – which must be all of us, at some point. The book is profoundly practical, hopeful, and a wonderful encouragement to see leadership as partnership.



Stephen Cottrell, *Hit the Ground Kneeling: Seeing Leadership Differently*, Church House Publishing, 2008.

How often does a book about leadership make you smile, properly from the heart? This one will; from the title on, it is imaginative, amusing, entertaining and yet simultaneously very serious. It is endorsed by no less than Jeremy Vine, one of the UK’s best known broadcasters working mainly on BBC Radio 2, and that gives you a sense of this book’s audience.

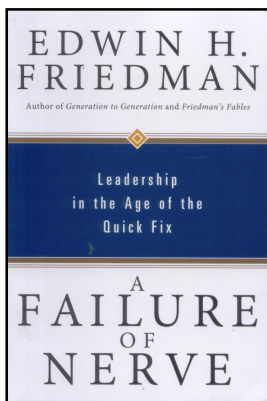
In a wonderful concluding ‘chapter’, Bishop Cottrell even provides a one paragraph summary of the book. He wants you to know exactly what the best leadership is; his overarching message is that it does not involve frantic action, grand visions, manic overwork, or ruthlessness. Rather, counterintuitively, the kind of leadership we should aspire to involves kneeling, contemplating, being slow and gentle, and as much inclusion as we can manage. It is a wonderful, valuable book of 81 pages.



Bill Easum, *Leadership on the OtherSide: No Rules, Just Clues*, Abingdon, 2000.

Easum is a US-based church consultant. His book's title not only challenges spellcheckers, but invites readers to move beyond a Newtonian universe to one where chaos is always creating something new. Organic metaphors abound, from DNA to giant gardens. Easum notes how many churches and their leaders unwittingly inhabit an organisational world which still reflects the machine metaphors of Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford.

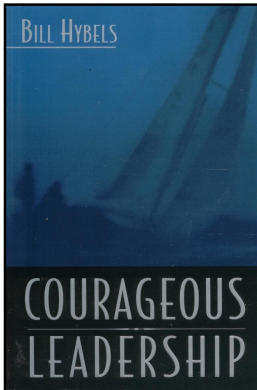
Easum encourages readers to live at the messy edge of chaos. Disturbance is healthy: leaders who seek harmony and equilibrium will lead churches into stagnation and death. The section on making disciples invokes the creative image of fractals, repeating patterns we should observe in church life. Each chapter (or portal into the otherside) concludes with questions to encourage reflection (ironically, mainly at an individual level). Useful endnotes and a bibliography offer further clues.



Edwin H Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, Seabury, 2007.

Friedman, following family systems theory, says leaders need to be self-differentiated and step outside a system's games (whether that is a family, congregation or nation) in order to affect it most profoundly. Leaders often avoid risk and the inevitable sabotage that comes to those who self-differentiate rather than collude and maintain the equilibrium of the system. But doing so blocks change and improvement.

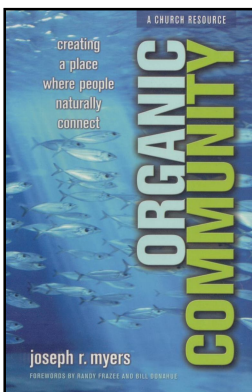
In this posthumously published work, Rabbi Friedman explores the impact of triangles when two people, to diffuse emotional tension between them, scapegoat or collude with the 'problem' of a third person or object. Readers need a primer in systems theory alongside the book, yet it highlights how a failure of nerve in anxious times can prevent leaders remaining self-differentiated. This depends on self-knowledge and self-control. Fascinating theory but hope can be elusive in it.



Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, Zondervan, 2002.

Hybels is best known as the leading figure in the Willow Creek phenomenon, which grew from a community church in South Barrington, near Chicago to global leadership summits. His book reads like the passionate story of one person's development and reflection on leadership over three decades.

It manifests a glorious series of contradictions, from the megachurch phenomenon to the intimacy of leadership, from large programmes to the personal, from the visionary to the immediate, from a task focus (albeit bringing in God's Kingdom) to realising it through others. Above all, does 'courage' refer to the behaviour of one in the limelight or to deeply personal struggles over principles and people? The chapter on leadership pathways offers a biblically grounded glimpse into the diverse spiritual possibilities open to leaders. It is a book from which we can learn much.

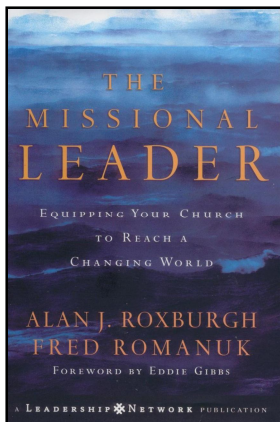


Joseph R Myers, *Organic Community: Creating a Place where People Naturally Connect*, Baker, 2007.

A great contribution from the excellent Emergent Village network. Myers writes of a series of movements, starting with the need to move from master plans with carefully derived strategies to a looser organic order. The book is imbued throughout with a healthy appreciation of evolutionary insights applied to organizational life. Myers covers not only the expected – measurement, power, partners, coordination – but the less expected, bringing an

artist's view to patterns and language. He uses stories from his own and others' experience.

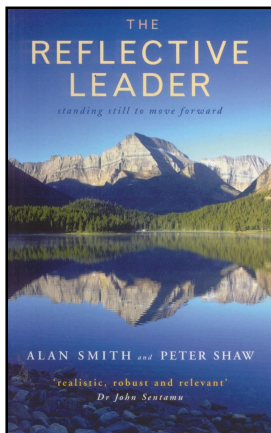
Some noted, with mild irritation, the irony of an organic book appearing too linear in its models, despite the closing plea for leaders to move from programmers to environmentalists. But we recognised that disturbance usually leads to growth. And we know that the book has been found helpful both within and beyond the faith communities at which it is aimed.



Alan J Roxburgh & Bill Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, Jossey-Bass, 2006.

Roxburgh and Romanuk bring a wide range of perspectives to their seminal book on missional leadership. Roxburgh grew up in Liverpool before moving to Canada; Romanuk worked as an organizational psychologist. The traditions they engage with range from Anabaptist to Anglican, from Presbyterian to postmodern. Yet they are reassuring for traditional denominations with local congregations.

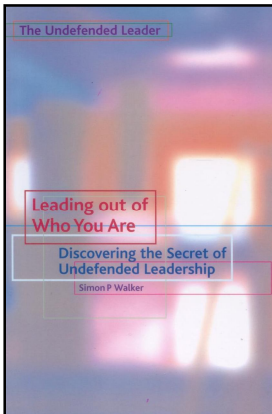
The authors write of the importance of leaders creating environments where the people of God may thrive. They speak of principles, rather than programmes, although they do offer a missional model. It is not entirely linear, invoking the metaphor of a yacht tacking with and against the winds of change (and the Spirit of God?). Missional churches engage with their context, liberating the people of God to go out in the public spaces of their communities and draw others to join them.



Alan Smith & Peter Shaw, *The Reflective Leader: Standing Still to Move Forward*, Canterbury Press, 2011.

A Bishop and an international executive coach explore the importance of time for reflection. This is a book that insists you interact with it as the short chapters all end with a series of questions. It is the cumulative effect of this encouragement to ask questions rather than the power of a single big idea that made this one of our choices. If you do what it asks, whether you are new to leadership or a seasoned leader, it will give you many 'ah-ha' moments.

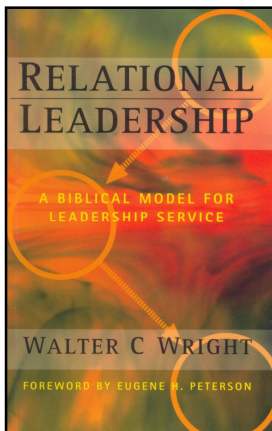
Covering a lot of the leadership and management basics, it is perhaps most useful because neither of the authors regard themselves as natural reflectors. They are activists sharing learning rather than a natural inclination, and in doing so provide hope, and a structure, that will help those of us for whom reflection is not easy.



Simon P Walker, *Leading Out of Who You Are: Discovering the Secret of Undefended Leadership*, Piquant, 2007.

Defended leaders are on stage with backstage mess hidden from view. Walker describes four types of defended egos based on trust – shaping (trust self and others); defining (trust self, critical of world), adapting (high trust of others not of self), defending (no trust of self or others).

Walker then explores the undefended leader as free, as one who receives life as a gift, shows child-like qualities of trust, wonder and play and whose moral authority is shaped by struggle that leads to love, expressed in vocation. Leadership is not about success but enabling people to take responsibility for their lives thus embracing their humanity. Walker develops this thinking in the wider context of organisations and nations in the further two books of a useful trilogy for those who find models helpful.



Walter C Wright, *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Leadership Service*, Paternoster, 2000.

Wright builds on his mentor Max de Pree's assertion that 'belief precedes behaviour'. Therefore the ability of a leader to be centred – to know who they are, that they are held in God and their meaning and service comes through their 'calling' is vital. The images in Jude (New Testament book) of false leaders are the basis for chapters on influence and service, vision and hope, relationships and power, and dependency and accountability.

The characters of the letter to Philemon provide a backdrop with Onesimus the runaway slave showing leadership, Philemon being called upon to implement the vision of reconciliation, and Tychicus, the messenger ensuring the relationships enable it to happen. This is a book that shows that who you are and how you relate to people matters when it comes to leadership.

Shortlisted Books

General Leadership

Alan Briskin, Sheryl Erickson, John Ott & Tom Callanan, *The Power of Collective Wisdom: and the Trap of Collective Folly*, Berrett-Koehler, 2009.

Robert K Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 25th anniversary edn, Paulist, 2002.

Gary Hamel, with Bill Breen, *The Future of Management*, Harvard Business School Press, 2007.

Peter P Robertson, *Always Change a Winning Team: Why Reinvention and Change Are Prerequisites for Business Success*, Cyan, 2005.

Simon Western, *Leadership: A Critical Text*, Sage, 2008.

Christian Leadership

Kester Brewin, *The Complex Christ: Signs of Emergence in the Urban Church*, SPCK, 2004 [= *Signs of Emergence: A Vision for a Church that is Organic/Networked Decentralized/Bottom-up/Communal/Flexible {Always Evolving}*, Baker, 2007]

Eddie Gibbs, *Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture*, IVP, 2005.

Michael Sadgrove, *Wisdom and Ministry: The Call to Leadership*, SPCK, 2008.

Andrew Watson, *The Fourfold Leadership of Jesus: Come, Follow, Wait, Go*, BRF, 2008.

William H Willimon, *Pastor The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, Abingdon, 2002.

The Panel

- Revd Rowena Francis, Moderator, URC Northern Synod
- Tim Harle, Associate Consultant, Bristol Business School; Lay Canon, Bristol Cathedral; Vice-Chair, MODEM (convenor)
- Revd James Lawrence, Director, Development Team, Church Pastoral Aid Society
- Dr Tim Ling, National Adviser, Continuing Ministerial Development, Church of England
- Revd Canon Dr Roger Matthews, Director for Mission and Ministry, Diocese of Chelmsford; Trustee, The Leadership Institute
- Dr Eve Poole, Associate Faculty, Ashridge Business School; Trustee, Foundation for Church Leadership; Trustee, Christian Association of Business Executives
- Revd Richard Steel, Convenor, Grove Books Leadership Group; Rector of Kirkheaton
- Dr Scott Taylor, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Leadership Studies, University of Exeter Business School
- Fiona van Graan, Associate Course Director, The Leadership Trust

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About MODEM

MODEM is a UK-based ecumenical Christian network, which encourages conversations and developments in the areas of leadership, management and ministry. It is an organisation in association with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). Membership is open to individuals and organisations. Members receive discounts on publications and conferences, and a journal covering the latest news, views and reviews, as well as news from the spirituality at work movement. For details about membership, visit <http://www.modem-uk.org/join.html>.

MODEM's fourth book, ***How to Become a Creative Church Leader*** was published in 2008. MODEM's fifth book, ***101 Ideas to Transform the Local Church***, is due for publication by Canterbury Press in 2012. MODEM also supports Grove Books' Leadership Series. For further information, visit www.modem-uk.org.

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