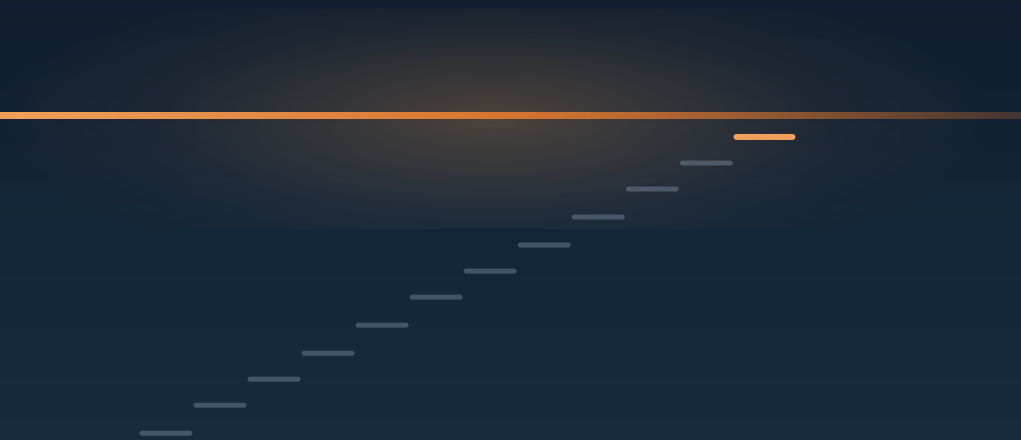
The Leadership Awakening

The Leader You Already Are



HANS STAVERSJÖ

HANS STAVERSJÖ

The Leadership Awakening

The Leader You Already Are

© 2026 Hans Staversjö

Published by Orangize · orangize.se

Translated from the Swedish original *Ledarskapsuppvaknandet – Ledaren du redan är*

First edition

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced beyond what is permitted by law without the permission of the author.

The use of automated technology to analyse text and data in digital form in order to generate information (text and data mining) is prohibited.

Publisher: BoD – Books on Demand, Östermalmstorg 1, 114 42 Stockholm, Sweden, bod@bod.se

Printed by: Libri Plureos GmbH, Friedensallee 273, 22763 Hamburg, Germany

ISBN: 978-91-8150-121-6

The Twelve Steps

PART 1 · THE FOUNDATION

1. **Zones of Control** — What can you actually influence?
2. **Accepting Uncertainty** — Leading in what cannot be controlled
3. **Separating the Role** — The leader and the person behind the role

PART 2 · SELF-KNOWLEDGE

4. **Taking Stock** — What do you bring with you into leadership?
5. **The Outside Mirror** — What you cannot see yourself
6. **Prioritising Under Uncertainty** — Choosing right when everything seems important

PART 3 · ACTION

7. **Handing It Over** — Humility as a leadership strength
8. **Facing the Consequences** — Seeing your real impact
9. **Restoring Trust** — Repairing what has broken

PART 4 · ENDURANCE

10. **Ongoing Follow-Up** — Leadership as daily practice
11. **Decision Discipline** — Clear choices in an unclear world
12. **Passing It On – and Culture** — Carrying it forward

Contents

Introduction: The Leader You Already Are 5

PART 1 · THE FOUNDATION

1. Zones of Control 10
2. Accepting Uncertainty 18
3. Separating the Role 26

PART 2 · SELF-KNOWLEDGE

4. Taking Stock 36
5. The Outside Mirror 45
6. Prioritising Under Uncertainty 54

PART 3 · ACTION

7. Handing It Over 64
8. Facing the Consequences 73
9. Restoring Trust 82

PART 4 · ENDURANCE

10. Ongoing Follow-Up 94
11. Decision Discipline 103
12. Passing It On – and Culture 113

Closing: The next step on the journey 123

INTRODUCTION

The Leader You Already Are

You have probably opened this book for one of two reasons. Either you are already carrying a leadership role that feels heavier than it should – or you sense that you already think and act like a leader, without any official title having confirmed it yet. Perhaps it is an organisation that has outgrown the structure you once built. Perhaps it is a colleague whose trust you have lost without quite knowing how. Perhaps it is just a silence inside you – a feeling that you are doing the right things but never quite landing on why. Or perhaps it is the opposite: a feeling that you already have what it takes, but have never been given the chance to show it.

This is not a book about becoming a different kind of leader. It is a book about no longer straining to be what you already are.

Most leadership books promise you a new system: seven habits, five levels, three pillars. This book does the opposite. It starts from the assumption that you already have what is needed – the competence, the judgement, the will to do right – but that the way there has been covered over. By demands. By expectations. By years of solving things faster than you had time to understand them.

What is proposed here is a journey in twelve steps. Not because the steps themselves are magic, but because the order matters. You cannot build trust before you have seen yourself clearly. You cannot set the right priorities before you have accepted that you cannot control everything. Each step builds

on the one before – just as real leadership does, in reality, outside the models.

The book is divided into four parts. **The Foundation** is about seeing yourself and your situation as they actually are – not as you wish they were. **Self-Knowledge** takes you deeper, into patterns you may have recognised for a long time without ever putting words to them. **Action** is where insight becomes decision, and decision becomes consequence. **Endurance** is about the thing no leadership book wants to talk about enough: how you keep it up, year after year, without burning out the very thing that made you good in the first place.

Throughout the book you are called **the leader** – not because every title is already in place, but because that is who you already are in what you do, whatever the business card says. It is a deliberate choice. You are not a student to be graded after each chapter. You are the one who already carries, or will soon carry, the responsibility – and who now gets twelve steps for carrying it with less strain and more clarity. Nor does it matter where you lead: in a company, a public agency, a local authority, an association or a religious community. The fundamental questions of leadership are the same everywhere – only the scenery differs.

You do not need to be ready to begin. You only need to be willing to see clearly – which is exactly what the next step is about.

And do let go of the idea that this will proceed in a straight, tidy line. It will not. You will recognise yourself in some steps immediately, and struggle with others for weeks. You will sometimes go back to a step you thought you had already dealt with. That is not failure – it is what real change

actually looks like, as opposed to how it is described in most books about leadership.

Turn the page, and let us begin where all change actually begins: with seeing what you can actually influence, and what was never yours to control in the first place.

PART 1

The Foundation

Steps 1–3

STEP 1

Zones of Control

What can you actually influence?

It is a quarter past four, and the meeting should have ended an hour ago.

Maria leans across the table again. She has shown the figures, explained the customer survey, gone through the arguments a third time. If the team just words the offer the right way, she thinks, the customers will understand the value. There has to be a way to make them understand.

Someone suggests yet another version of the presentation. Someone else sighs. The whiteboard is covered in crossings-out.

Driving home that evening, she cannot point to a single decision that was made. What chafes is not the hours in the conference room – it is the feeling of having worked harder than ever and still not moved anything an inch. She is exhausted in a way that rest does not help.

What she does not yet see – what the first step is about – is that she has spent the whole afternoon trying to steer something that was never hers to steer: what other people are going to think. The meeting had no decision to make, because the only thing she really wanted to decide about sat in the heads of customers who were not in the room.

The three zones

There is a question that separates leaders who last from leaders who wear out, and it is simpler than it ought to be: *where do you put your energy?*

Not how much energy. Where.

Everything you meet in your leadership – every situation, every problem, every relationship – lies in one of three zones. The first is **what you fully control**. It is a smaller area than most people think. Your own choices. Your behaviour in the room. Your preparation. How you react when something goes against you. What you say, and what you choose not to say. That is all. Nothing else in your leadership lies entirely in your hands.

In practice, this means: you decide whether you come to the meeting prepared. You decide whether you interrupt or hear someone out. You decide whether you answer the angry email tonight or tomorrow morning. That is your zone – completely and entirely.

The second zone is **what you can influence but not decide**. This is where almost everything that makes leadership leadership lives: other people's decisions, the team's motivation, the customer's trust, how your message is received. You can prepare, argue, listen, build relationships – and all of it raises the odds of the outcome you want. But the decision is always made somewhere else, in someone else's head.

In practice: you can give a clear presentation – but you cannot decide that the team will be engaged. You can give a colleague honest feedback – but you cannot decide that she takes it on board. Your hand is on the scale, never on the outcome.

The third zone is **what you neither control nor influence**. The market. The economy. Decisions already made. The past.

This zone is enormous, and it has a property that makes it dangerous: it often feels like zone two. It feels as though it *ought* to be possible to do something – if you just phrase it better, work harder, find the right argument.

In practice: you cannot influence a competitor cutting its prices. You cannot influence a decision head office has already made. If you lead in local or national government: you cannot influence the budget frame the politicians have set, or the legislation that governs your remit. And no matter how many meetings you hold, you cannot decide what other people are going to think.

That is where Maria was sitting. At a quarter past four, with a whiteboard full of crossings-out, she was trying to influence what customers who were not in the room would think – and treating it as a matter of effort. More work, more versions, one more meeting. But what she was trying to steer did not lie in zone two. Customers' opinions are shaped by their needs, their experiences, their reality. She could give them better material to form an opinion about – that was her zone. What they then thought was theirs.

The distinction sounds academic. It is anything but. Energy spent in the wrong zone does not simply disappear – it comes back as something else. As exhaustion without results. As frustration with people who "don't get it". As a nagging sense of working more and achieving less. Most leaders on their way to wearing themselves out are not doing too little. They are doing the wrong things at full force.

Why we get stuck in the wrong zone

If the zones are so simple to describe, why do experienced, sensible leaders spend years of energy in zone three?

Because it feels like leading. Fighting the unchangeable looks like commitment, both to the people around you and in the mirror. The person who worries about the market appears to be taking responsibility. The person who holds one more meeting about the customers' opinions appears not to be giving up. Letting go of zone three can feel like the opposite of leadership – like passivity, like resignation.

But there is a less comfortable explanation too. Zone three is safe. That sounds backwards, but think about it: whoever fights the impossible can never truly fail. If there is no result, it is because of the market, the customers, the circumstances. Zone one is more dangerous. There are no excuses there. Your behaviour in the room, your preparation, your choices – that is where it shows, in black and white, what you actually did and did not do.

In practice: it is easier to brood over a decision head office made than to ask yourself why you did not say what you thought before it was made. The first is frustrating but comfortable. The second is uncomfortable but yours.

The movement: from illusion to reach

This step does not ask you to care less. It asks you to see clearly where your actual reach ends – and then to move your energy there.

For Maria, that would have meant something very concrete. Instead of a third round about what the customers ought to think: an hour with the team about the only thing they actually had a say over – the material, the offer, the next conversation. The meeting would have ended on time. And it would have ended with a decision, because everything on the table lay within reach of the people sitting there.

That is the movement of the first step: from the illusion of control to clarity about your actual reach. That clarity is not a loss, even if it may feel like one at first. What you let go of is not influence – it is imagined influence, and it has never given you anything but fatigue. What you get back is strength that is enough for what can actually be moved.

One more thing before we go on. Knowing where the zones lie is not the same as being comfortable with it. There will be days when zone three screams for your attention – when the unchangeable is the only thing you can think about. That is not failure. It is human. The next chapter is about exactly that: how to lead in what you cannot control, without pretending that you can.

The portrait: The coach who stopped watching the opposition

Lennart had coached the football club for eleven years when they finally reached the play-off for promotion to the second tier.

He had built the team from mid-table nobodies into a top side with the kind of patience that never shows in the league table: training schedules, video analysis, one-to-one conversations. The players trusted him. He was known for always being the best prepared person in the building.

Three weeks before the play-off, he stopped sleeping properly.

The opposition had two players with top-flight experience and a budget twice the size of Lennart's. He began watching their matches in the evenings. First once a week. Then every night. He built game plans against their attacking play, changed them the next day, changed them back. At training,

the players noticed he was somewhere else – he was looking at them, but he was seeing the play-off.

A week before the match he held a briefing that lasted fifty minutes. Forty-five of them were about the opposition: their key players, their formations, their set pieces. When the briefing ended, the team was quieter than when it began. The captain lingered in the dressing room and said what nobody else dared to: *"We know everything about them now. But I don't think we know what we're supposed to do ourselves."*

Lennart did not get angry. That was the turning point – he recognised something. For eleven years he had heard himself tell the players: *put your energy into what you can control*. Play your game, not theirs. And here he sat, with eleven years of his own groundwork behind him, having spent three weeks training his team in something they would never be able to control: how good the opposition was.

That evening he cleared out the briefing. The next training session was about one thing only: the team's own game. Their pressing, their defence, their strengths. What they could influence – the preparation, the effort, the way they met one another on the pitch. He mentioned the opposition for five minutes, then not again.

They lost the play-off by two goals.

But those who were there that evening saw a team playing its own match to the final second – not a team chasing someone else's. And in the dressing room afterwards, in the silence that follows a defeat, the captain said something Lennart carried with him longer than any play-off: *"That was the best we have ever played."*

What Lennart lost that evening was on the scoreboard. What he won did not show there: a team that knew what

was theirs to do – and a coach who remembered where his own reach ended.

Questions for reflection

Take a moment with these questions before you read on. There are no right answers – only yours.

1. What are you spending most of your mental energy on right now? Not most of your working hours – most of your *headspace*. The thing you turn over in the car, the thing still there after you have switched off the light.
2. How much of that can you actually change? Be honest. Does it lie in your zone – or does it just feel as though it ought to?
3. What are you trying to control right now that really belongs to someone else? A colleague's motivation. A customer's decision. A peer's opinion of you.

The exercise: Three things, three zones

This exercise takes ten minutes and requires only a piece of paper.

Write down the three things that take the most energy out of you right now. Write them as they feel, not as they ought to be phrased – "I'm worried about the reorganisation", "I get frustrated with Johan on the steering group", "I don't know whether the customers will renew the contract".

Then place each one in the right zone. Ask, for each of them: *Can I decide this? Can I influence it? Or does it lie outside both?*

Be careful with the last question. The most common mistake is to put things in zone two that really belong in zone

three – because it feels better. If you are unsure, test it: *what could I concretely do tomorrow that would move this?* If there is an honest answer, it is zone two. If all you have is "work harder" or "think about it more" – then it is zone three.

Finally, look at where your three things ended up. If two or three of them are in zone three, you have just seen in black and white why you are more tired than your work justifies. That is not failure. It is information – and that kind of information is exactly what the rest of this book is built on.

The bridge ahead

Now you know where your zone of control ends. But there, just beyond the line, waits the next question – the harder one: how do you lead in what cannot be controlled, without pretending that you can? That is where we go now.

END OF PREVIEW

The Leadership Awakening

The Leader You Already Are

You have read the introduction and the first of twelve steps. The rest of the book – 124 pages, in print or as an e-book – is at

en.orangize.se/the-book

E-book 99 SEK · Printed edition from booksellers worldwide
ISBN 978-91-8150-121-6