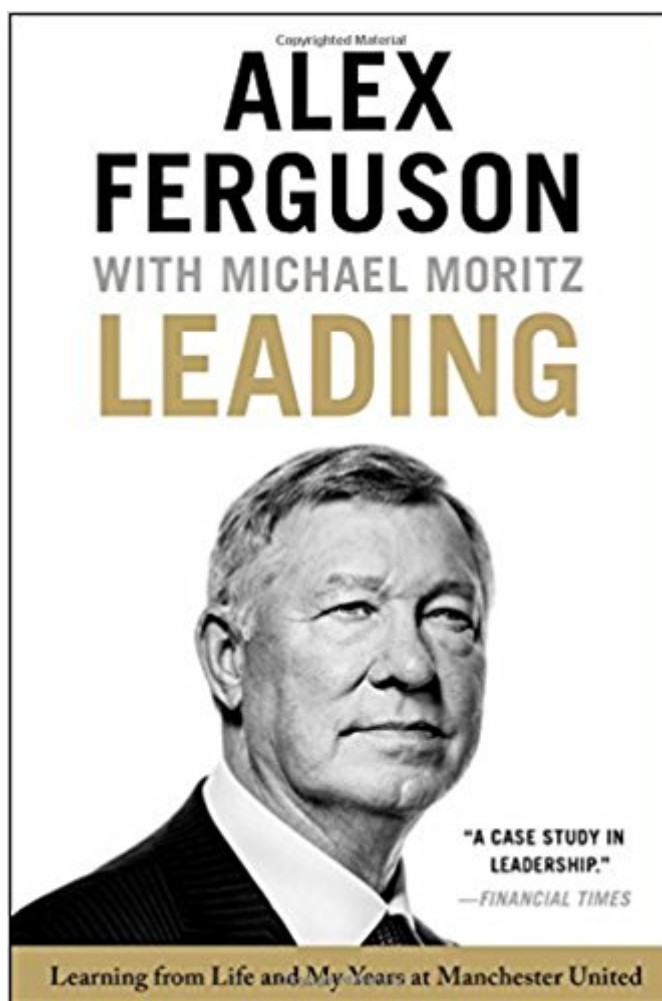


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# Leading: Learning From Life And My Years At Manchester United



## Synopsis

From the winningest soccer coach ever, best known for 27 triumphant years with Manchester United, comes the book that decodes the key tools he used to deliver sustained success on and off the field. After an astonishing career-first in Scotland, and then over 27 years with Manchester United Football Club, Sir Alex Ferguson analyzes the pivotal leadership decisions of his 38 years as a manager and, with his friend and collaborator Sir Michael Moritz, draws out lessons that anyone can use in business and life to generate long-term transformational success. From hiring practices to firing decisions, from dealing with transition to teamwork, from mastering the boardroom to responding to failure and adversity, *Leading* is as inspiring as it is practical, and a go-to reference for any leader in business, sports, and life.

## Book Information

Paperback: 416 pages

Publisher: Hachette Books; Reprint edition (September 20, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316268100

ISBN-13: 978-0316268103

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.2 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 80 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #117,727 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #23 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Coaching > Soccer](#) #49 in [Books > Business & Money > Industries > Sports & Entertainment > Sports](#) #68 in [Books > Sports & Outdoors > Soccer](#)

## Customer Reviews

Sir Alex Ferguson is a former Scottish player and manager who managed Manchester United from 1986 to 2013. His time at the club has led to Ferguson being regarded as one of the most successful, admired and respected managers in the history of the game. On May 8, 2013, Ferguson announced his retirement as manager of Manchester United. During his 27 years at the club, he won 38 trophies, including 13 Premier Leagues and two UEFA Champions League titles. Sir Michael Moritz is a venture capitalist and chairman of Sequoia Capital, the original backers of Apple, Cisco, YouTube and WhatsApp; he has also served on the board of directors of Google, LinkedIn, PayPal and Yahoo!. He is a former journalist with Time Magazine and author of the first history of Apple, *The Little Kingdom*. Originally from Wales, he lives near San Francisco, CA.

Sir Alex Ferguson has just come out with this book which he co-authored with Sir Michael Moritz, chairman of Sequoia Capital. I was lucky enough to see them interviewed by the Financial Times editor, Lionel Barber, at the Southbank centre in London. The talk was fascinating, and the book is well worth reading. Indeed, even as a Liverpool fan, I have to admire Alex Ferguson's track record as manager of Manchester United: he won 17 league titles, 14 domestic cups and 2 Champions leagues. Admittedly, he didn't reach Liverpool manager Bob Paisley's 3 Champions leagues, but no-one is perfect. To get some sense of what made him tick is intriguing. What is clear is that he was obsessed with football. His family knew that was his priority, which meant missed Christmases and even sacking his son when he wasn't up to scratch when playing for Manchester United. His knowledge seems almost encyclopaedic. When Lionel Barber revealed that he had supported Tottenham Hotspur since 1961, Sir Alex was quick to say that was the year Spurs won the "double" (the league and the FA Cup). One interesting thing was despite his success, before every game he always had that churning feeling in his stomach, especially at Anfield. But whatever the feelings, his goal was always to win. He learned more in defeats than victories to make sure it didn't happen again. Another character trait he developed was to make decisions with imperfect information. In the book, he chides those that lack confidence to stick to decisions or those that are in a perpetual quest for the last morsel of information using that as an excuse not to make a decision. He believes consistency is critical in leadership so people know who you are. He had a reputation for losing his temper, but he found when it was for the right reason it was fine and he never held on to anger. He views listening as critical, and reads lots (with a particular fondness for books on the military and American history). One of the defining features of Sir Alex's tenure was his focus on renewing his team with young players. Early on he intended to make Manchester United a great club, rather than just creating a great team. As it turns out he found inspiration from Warren Buffet's long-term approach. But that's where his admiration for the investment community stops. He writes that he heard that the combined earnings of hedge fund managers is more than Premier league, Bundesliga, La Liga and Serie A combined, and goes on: "Don't tell me that some 28 year old who can manipulate a spreadsheet (of which there are hundreds of thousands, maybe million) deserves to be paid more than a midfielder playing for Swansea City or Southampton" The path to transforming Manchester United started on his first day in 1986, when he wasn't afraid to tell the players to stop drinking (the team had a problem). In the end, he sacked some of the older and less willing players, though he regretted it took him so long to make the call. He set up a much bigger

scouting system locally in Manchester and motivated the scouts to find the best young players in the town, not just the street. In players he looked for drive and a good work ethic, which trumped talent alone. The best players Ronaldo, Giggs, Cantona, Beckham had to be dragged off the training ground. Bryan Robson, despite shoulder injuries, would do 1000 press-ups a day. Players were dropped if they missed training. In the long run, principles were more important than expediency. As for his style of managing, he focused on relentless homework, training, and a good organisation. He would dwell on opponents weaknesses not strengths. He kept a close eye on player ages - the team's median age hovered around 26 for a remarkable 25 years. He would have a four cycle to turn the team over. He saw that exceptional players had to be challenged in order not to get bored. Equally, he saw that clashes between players could destroy a team. One such example was Teddy Sheringham and Andy Cole who constantly clashed. On one occasion they argued in the tunnel at half-time. Sir Alex told them if they ever repeated that behaviour they would both be sacked. It never happened again. He was careful how to define success - rather than telling them to "win the league and two cups" he would tell them to "win every match", which made it more tangible. He also learned that his physical presence around players during training was as important a motivational tool as anything. Sir Alex may not seem to change much, but he did incorporate the latest sports science. Some were accidental. A female ophthalmologist wagered that his new grey away kit would lead to losses as the players would not be able to see other. This proved to be correct. Sir Alex then took her on, and she worked with the players to widen their peripheral vision. Others were more planned. He took to latest developments in sports science. Players would get full physical tests before and after their summer breaks. This included every dimension of their physicality as well as blood tests. He shifted away from excessive running in training to more core work. He incorporated video analysis around training and try to eke out 1% improvements in players. As for the broader club, he ensured he knew everyone from the laundry people to the groundsman. On foreign trips, he made sure to make much of the hotel chef. At the same time, some traits from his upbringing never disappeared, most notably his frugality. Indeed, he got so sick of his players swapping shirts or giving them away, that he told them they had to pay for the replacement shirts out of their own pockets! Finally, he sees leadership as a quest to never stop building - otherwise stagnation follows. For more like this, see [...]

I enjoy this book tremendously. Not just because I'm a soccer junky but because it goes beyond success on the football pitch and addresses what it takes to be a good leader in any industry. This book is great for the soccer mad fan that wants some inside access to the dynasty of Manchester

United. It's also fantastic for the person that wants to get more out of themselves and their life. I loved the football but my favorite chapter may be the epilogue comparing Sir Alex and European football to the cut throat world of high tech Silicon Valley. Enjoy!

Candid, insightful and exciting. A probe into one of the most successful football (or soccer) managers of all time. Sir Alex Ferguson's grit, perseverance and values are highly valuable in today's world where these components are often overshadowed by hype, talent and quick success. A must read not only for sports fans but anyone interested in business and team management.

This is a great book! It is written in a very interesting manner, and has a lot of useful advices

Fantastic book written from a different perspective on one of the greatest man managers and leaders of all time. Sir Alex was relentless, smart, intuitive and build team after successful team restoring Manchester United to their historic glory and status. There are golden nuggets of experience and strategies contained within that are priceless. Fabulous read for the football fan or business man, anyone who wants to learn how Sir Alex built success and maintained such high standards year after year.

Well-written and straight to the point. Considering I only bought it as a Manchester United fan, not as a source of any particularly useful information, it's a collection of a whole lot of useful information. But not in an overwhelming way. Also feels a bit motivational, but not in the that's-what-I-paid-for kind of way; more like a real-life illustration that long-term success as a leader is difficult to attain but still attainable. In summary, buy it and read it.

Some info that will appeal to football supporters especially those Utd fans. However there is a tendency to over emphasise the skillset of Sir Alex Ferguson with that need by those in industry & other professionals. No doubt Sir Alex has leadership qualities but I believe its an indulgence to compare him to those who require leadership skills for more crucial & lifechanging roles!

"Plenty of organization achieve one success, some notch up several, but few make it a habit of a lifetime. Manchester United, under Sir Alex, demonstrates how the taste of success gives people confidence that they can repeat the accomplishment; set a standard that, at a minimum, needs to be matched; and, as an ever-expanding cadre of people experience triumph, begins to become

self-perpetuating. Winners wants to be around winners." Page 376.

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