

Legacy: What the All Blacks can teach us about the business of life.

Book Review by Dawn Pare

Legacy is based on the legendary All Blacks of New Zealand and explores leadership, culture and techniques needed to build a successful team, revealing some powerful and practical leadership lessons that are not just aligned with sporting teams.

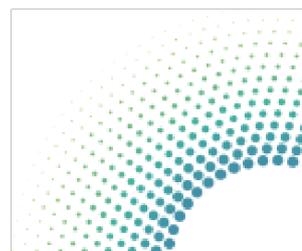
There are so many leadership lessons that can be learnt from the All Blacks, the most successful professional team in history, undefeated in over 75% of their international matches over the last 100 years. James Kerr brings to life many stories and insightful examples that many teams in different businesses can understand and put into practice. The paramount importance of the All Blacks culture is fascinating and the stories behind this makes a very interesting read. The book is written in a very easy to read manner and could easily be aligned to other organisations who want to understand the importance of values and culture.

The culture of the All Blacks is inspiring and plays a significant part in their success and the book explains how their commitment, continuous improvement and the values they live by all contribute to them being a winning team. No individual is bigger than the team. The book is based on the idea of leaving a legacy ... to leave the jersey in a better place and that we are all stewards of a cultural legacy.

Each chapter identifies meaningful insights and I have picked out my highlights to share with you.

Character:

The book begins with the importance of character – “a successful leader must have absolute pride in performance which is balanced with humility”. The chapter refers to the All Blacks sweeping the shed – they clean up after themselves and don’t expect anyone to look after them. In a high-performing



team, it is so important to have the right people with the right behaviours.

“Character triumphs over talent” – it is more important to have the right behaviours than to be the most talented. How true this is.

Adapt:

Organisations need to adapt to change and “when you’re on top of your game, change your game”. As Charles Darwin said, “it is not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change”. It is crucial to create an adaptive culture.

Purpose:

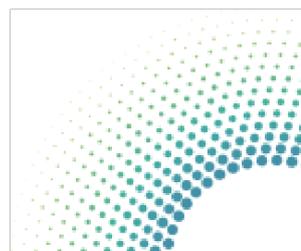
We know from Simon Sinek how important it is to start with the why and James Kerr shares his view in this chapter on purpose. Daniel Pink, author of Drive, defines purpose as the more you have to play for, the better you play. It comes back to what drives you and, if you can connect personal meaning, you can create belief and a sense of direction – something that is emotive, and you feel strongly about will drive and inspire you and makes you go above and beyond every day. The All Blacks refer to the Maori word ubuntu which means something greater than us, it’s a reason for being. Our purpose for Evolve is as strong as it gets to transform children’s life chances.

Responsibility:

The next leadership lesson in the book is about taking responsibility and that all leaders have the responsibility to create leaders – “to arm their subordinates with intent, and then step out of the way”. The idea that leaders deliberately handover responsibility in order to create more engaged team players giving people the opportunity to be outside their comfort zone and trusting them to get on with it.

Learn:

None of us are the finished article and we all have more to learn. Constant attention to practice and preparation are covered in the chapter to learn – it is key to creating a learning environment. By improving 100 things by 1% can make a huge difference and by challenging the way we do things we will



be the best we can be. To make a difference we need to get up every morning with the intention to be the best we can be.

Whanau:

I really like this chapter which is titled ‘no dickheads’. Whanau, Maori for family, meaning everyone must move in the same direction. How true this is – a team must have the same purpose and individual egos are let go for the greater cause. In Maori mythology, whanau is symbolised by a spearhead, an image derived in turn from the flight formation of the kawau. A spearhead has three tips – but to work properly, all the force must move in one direction.

Expectations:

A successful leader embraces expectation and always strives for more. The expectations of the All Blacks is for them “not to lose” – meeting targets is not enough, and the bar should always be raised to do better. The idea that if you can meet targets then maybe the targets are not challenging enough.

Preparation:

The mentality of the All Blacks is to “train to win” and with constant practice, dedication and positivity you can succeed. This practice conditions the brain and body to perform under pressure and develops the mindset to win.

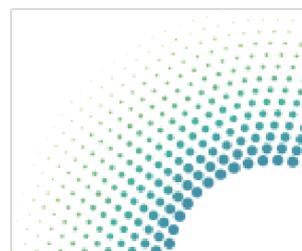
Pressure:

Kerr talks about the ‘red head’ state which is the stressful situation that takes hold of you and results in you losing control of your behaviours and therefore letting the situation get the better of you. On the other hand, the ‘blue head’ state is where you maintain control and make good decisions under pressure. It’s key to know how to manage, deal and embrace pressure and to control your behaviours when under pressure.

Authenticity:

“Know thy self” forms the chapter about authenticity. Leaders must be true to yourself and follow what you believe in. To be genuine, real and true to who you are – these are the signs of a great leader.

Sacrifice:



This chapter is about finding something you would die for – a purpose that we give our commitment to and therefore we go the extra mile for. “There are no crowds lining the extra mile” – it’s not about trying to look good to someone, it’s about doing it for yourself, it’s about the sacrifices we make.

Language and Rituals:

Language and rituals go towards creating a culture. Revolutions start with language - what you do and how you do it makes the difference. It’s the way we understand life and our place in it, how we interpret a sequence of events, a story. The importance of rituals and how they can aid the continual growth of a culture. Identity and purpose need to evolve and update. Inspiring leaders establish rituals to connect their teams, this is the emotional glue that holds a team together. This made me think of the rituals we have here at Evolve, like our annual awards, our pin badges to name but a few.

Whakapapa:

The book’s final chapter ends with Whakapapa and the principal of being a good ancestor, concluding that a good leader takes the responsibility to leave the jersey in a better place. The importance of making a “dent in the universe” - the difference you’ve made to someone.

Purpose is key and recognising there is a bigger purpose than just us. Muhammad Ali’s quote “service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth” is a reminder of the importance of the bigger purpose. The final inspirational quote from James Kerr is ‘when you’re on top of your game ... change your game’.

Legacy:

The All Blacks have successfully created a values-based, purpose driven culture which is a foundation for their long-term success. This does make me think personally about the legacy I will leave behind and the mark I will make. Definitely a very thought-provoking end to the book.

