



The Ignorant Maestro: How Great Leaders Inspire Unpredictable Brilliance

Itay Talgam

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“Choosing ignorance might seem a terrible quality to exhibit in your workplace—a sure path down the stairs and out the corporate door. But stick with me here and see how it leads you upward. You’ll understand why great leaders embrace ignorance and use it to elevate their people to new heights of achievement.”

A conductor in front of his orchestra is an iconic symbol of leadership—but what does a true maestro actually do to enable the right sort of cooperation among his players, leading to an excellent performance? If you think his primary job is making sure the musicians play the right notes, prepare to be surprised.

For twenty years, in addition to conducting orchestras around the world, Itay Talgam has been a “conductor of people” for companies large and small, for CEOs of Fortune 500 companies as well as startup entrepreneurs, and beyond. Drawing on his decades of experience on the podium, he teaches nonmusicians how conducting really works and how the conductor’s art can help leaders in any field.

In his lectures (including an acclaimed TED talk) and now in this book, Talgam shows why imposing your vision on your people is likely to backfire. Great conductors may know in advance how they want a piece to be played, but they make room for the creativity and passion of their musicians. They respect the gap between the baton and the instruments. They focus more on listening than on speaking. And they embrace their own ignorance, knowing that others may have better ideas than the conductor can imagine.

Talgam explores the nuances of leadership by describing the distinctive styles of six world-famous conductors: the commanding Riccardo Muti, the fatherly and passionate Arturo Toscanini, the calm Richard Strauss, the gurulike Herbert von Karajan, the dancing Carlos Kleiber, and the master of dialogue Leonard Bernstein. All took different approaches to the age-old leadership dilemma: how to maximize both control and creative freedom at the same time.

The Ignorant Maestro will empower you to help your own team make even more beautiful music. Talgam’s anecdotes and insights will change the way you think about listening, humility, and the path to unpredictable brilliance.

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