



9 Business Books That Will Change Your Life

From: **Dave Kerpen**, CEO, *Likeable Local*, NY Times Best-Selling Author & Keynote Speaker

Great leaders learn every day, and reading great books is the one of the best ways to learn. I've been fortunate enough to read some excellent books over the last fifteen years - books that have inspired me to change the way I see the world, my business, and the opportunities in front of me. In the order in which I've read them, here is a list of nine books which have changed my life. May they change yours as well:

1) *What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career Seekers* by Richard Bolles

I read this book when I was 21 years old and didn't know what to do with the rest of my life. It helped me go from a Crunch n Munch vendor at the ballpark to a top salesperson at Radio Disney. Fifteen years later, I have given at least 40 copies away to interns, staff and friends who are searching for their career purpose. It's difficult work - because not only will you read the book, but you'll have to do a lot of exercises and soul searching throughout - but whether you're 21 or 61, you'll emerge with a clearer vision of what you want to do next and where you'll want to work.

2) *Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers Into Friends & Friends Into Customers* by Seth Godin

No author has influenced me more as a marketer, business person and writer than Seth Godin. I could have easily included 9 books just by Godin - *Purple Cow*, *Tribes*, *Linchpin*, *Poke the Box* & his latest, *Icarus Deception* are all amongst my favorites. But *Permission Marketing* described social media marketing before it existed. Seth understood push-vs-pull marketing long before others, and this book, published in 1999, is still a must read for anyone in marketing today.

3) *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* by Malcolm Gladwell

This classic, one of three by Gladwell (*Blink* & *Outliers* are the others), demonstrates how successful products are launched, how ideas spread and how a trend can take off. It's influenced me a great deal, as a [word of mouth and social media marketer](#). And it's an essential read, whether you're in marketing or sales, or just want to become better at getting your ideas to spread.

4) *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap - and Others Don't* by Jim Collins

Collins is scientist of great companies - and this is his best work - chock full of case studies and simple yet profound principles like Level 5 Leadership. Even though I read this book when my company was only a handful of employees, it inspired me to want to build something great, and

enduring. Whether you work at a large company that has the potential itself to become great and enduring, or you have a vision of a company you'd like to one day build, this is a must-read.

5) *Mastering the Rockefeller Habits: What You Must Do to Increase The Value of Your Growing Firm* by Verne Harnish

It's hard to believe I even had a business before I read this book by the founder of my favorite business group, [Entrepreneurs Organization](#). Verne's [1-page strategic plan](#) is now used by both companies I've founded, and thousands of other companies. And our management teams use much of the methodology from this book. What's great is that it's both inspirational and quite practical - an excellent read for any entrepreneur or manager at a small business.

6) *The E-Myth: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work, and What to Do About It* by Michael Gerber

This is a must read for any small business owner - especially "technical" owners such as lawyers, accountants, florists, restaurateurs, consultants and [dentists](#). Gerber inspires the small business owner to get out of his/her own way, and to build systems and processes that scale and allow the business owner to work "on" the business and not "in" the business.

7) *Built to Sell: Creating a Business That Can Thrive Without You* by John Warrilow

Make no mistake - if you are an owner or leader at a business - this is a great, super valuable read, even if you or your owners have no intention or ever selling the business. The idea isn't to create a business in order to sell it - it's to create a business that has sustaining value beyond you and without you. Warrilow's book is a short, easy story - with powerful, unforgettable lessons - so much so, that after my business partner and I read it, we gave copies to the entire [Likeable team](#) to read.

8) *Rework* by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson

No matter what you do, this easy read will change the way you think about your work. It is so simply written, with small words and big pictures - and yet contains profound wisdom about how to be more productive and successful without being a workaholic or sacrificing anything. I read it in an hour on a plane, and have since shared it with two dozen colleagues, and referred back to it myself at least a dozen times.

9) *The Three Big Questions for a Frantic Family: A Leadership Fable About Restoring Sanity to The Most Important Organization in Your Life* by Patrick Lencioni

Along with Seth Godin, Patrick Lencioni is my favorite business author. I've read and **love** *The Advantage*, *Getting Naked*, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, and *The Five Temptations of a CEO*. But the reason I've selected this one as my favorite, is that, as [I've written before here](#), [our ultimate legacy isn't our career, but our family](#). In this book, Lencioni applies his management consulting methodology and brilliant storytelling ability to the running of a family. It's amazing how little

strategy most of us parents apply to the most important organization we've got, our families, and this book helps change all that. Six months after my wife and I read this book, I'm proud to report that our family now has a strategic plan, complete with a mission statement, quarterly objectives, and weekly 10-minute meetings. And it's going GREAT.

Those are my nine favorites- though I've read dozens more I've loved. I've also written a couple of books that I hope have changed a few lives - *Likeable Social Media*, about the role of social media in today's society and how organizations can best leverage it, and, recently, *Likeable Business*, about how to leverage [11 simple principles of customer-centric, staff-centric leadership](#) to succeed in today's social-business world.

Now, I'd love to know *YOUR* favorites. Which of these books have you read? What other business books have changed *YOUR* lives? What books have inspired *YOU* to become a better business person, leader and human being? Let me know in the comments here - and happy reading!