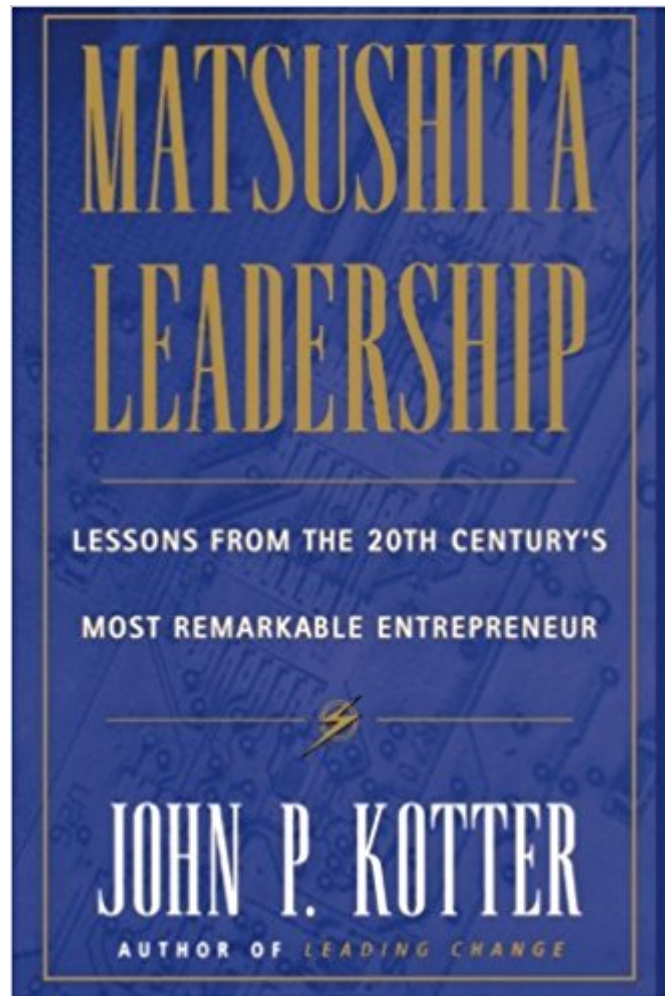




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# Matsushita Leadership



## Synopsis

He was one of the most inspirational role models of all time. Thrown into poverty at age four, Konosuke Matsushita (Mat-SOSH-ta) struggled with the early deaths of family members, an apprenticeship which demanded sixteen-hour days at age nine, all the problems associated with starting a business with neither money nor connections, the death of his only son, the Great Depression, the horror of World War II in Japan, and more. Yet John P. Kotter shows in this fascinating and instructive book how, instead of being ground down by these hardships, Matsushita grew to be a fabulously successful entrepreneur and business leader, the founder of Japan's General Electric: the \$65 billion a year Matsushita Electric Corporation. His accomplishments as a leader, author, educator, philanthropist, and management innovator are astonishing, and outshine even Soichiro Honda, J.C. Penney, Sam Walton, and Henry Ford. In this immensely readable book, Kotter relates how Matsushita created a large business, invented management practices that are increasingly being used today, helped lead his country's economic miracle after World War II wrote dozens of books in his latter years, founded a graduate school of leadership, created Japan's version of a Nobel Prize, and gave away hundreds of millions to good causes. The Matsushita story expands our notion of the possible, even for a sickly youngster who did not have the benefit of a privileged background, education, good looks, or a charismatic presence. It tells us much about leadership, entrepreneurship, a drive for lifelong learning, and their roots. It demonstrates the power of a longterm outlook, idealistic goals, and humility in the face of great success. Matsushita Leadership is both a biography and a set of lessons for careers and corporations in the 21st century. An inspirational story and a business primer, the implications are powerful, for organizations and for living a meaningful life.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Free Press; First Edition edition (May 16, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 068483460X

ISBN-13: 978-0684834603

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #478,235 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #138 in Books > Biographies &

Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Japanese #1311 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Business #3322 inÂ Books > Business & Money > Biography & History

## Customer Reviews

Noted Harvard business professor Kotter recounts the fascinating life of Konosuke Matsushita (1894-1989), the founder of Matsushita Electric Company. Matsushita started his adult life with no money, no connections, fewer than four years of formal education, and a family history filled with trauma. Yet his company's growth in revenues has exceeded that of the companies of such famous entrepreneurs as Soichiro Honda (Honda), Sam Walton (Wal-Mart), Akio Morita (Sony), James Cash Penney (J.C. Penney), and Henry Ford (Ford). Not a biography, this chronological bibliography instead highlights the educational patterns of Matsushita's life and draws out lessons from which readers in management can learn. Kotter clearly illustrates how Matsushita was able to motivate large groups of individuals. Recommended for corporate executives, businesspeople, academics, students, and aspiring entrepreneurs. ?Joseph W. Leonard, Miami Univ., Oxford, Ohio Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Two years before his death in 1989, Konosuke Matsushita was identified as one of the richest men in the world. When he died, the Japanese press bemoaned the loss of the "god of management." Matsushita built the business bearing his name into the world's largest consumer electronics company, turning out such familiar brands as Panasonic, Technics, and Quasar. He is also credited with establishing the Japanese system of paternal management, which offers lifetime employment. Rowland Gould and Michael Lombardi of the Success Motivation Institute of Japan produced the laudatory corporate history *The Matsushita Phenomenon* in 1970, but little English-language biographical material on Matsushita himself is available. Now Kotter, who happens to be the Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership at the Harvard Business School and the noted author of *The New Rules* (1994) and numerous other books on leadership and management, has written a thoroughly researched and illuminating portrait that shows its subject as not only a successful businessman but also a visionary humanitarian. David Rouse

Most business Titan's come up with a philosophy to propagate their enterprise, but Konosuke comes up with an empire under the sun to propagate a philosophy, that of co-existence and co-prosperity. He came up with the Division structure of Management at about the same time as

Alfred P. Sloan of General Motors, but was lessor known. Dr. Kotter unravels the mystery in this splendid book.

EXCELLENT BOOK ON LEADERSHIP, COMBINED WITH AND HISTORICAL PRESENTATION OF JAPAN.

Great motivational book. Bought it for a class assignment. Thoroughly enjoyed reading it.

The book provides an insight on what make Matsushita san tick, and drive, very happy to have got this book.

This is one of the best books I have read. There are many lessons that can be learned by reading this book. The book shows that even with major adversity, success can still be achieved.

There are few entrepreneurs left in Japan today, and Panasonic is one of those behemoths which went astray under bureaucratic consensus driven management producing 47 rice cookers when none made any money any longer. It would be good if they not only venerated their founder, but actually applied what he practiced when he set up a little sweat shop producing light bulb fittings in Osaka. Kotter retells the biography of this great man, a classical story from rags to riches, and he tells it well without undue adulation, including the company's fate during the war and Matsushita's private tragedies. In his later life he may have adhered to few sectarian sounding ideas (the Tenrykyo sect may have inspired his "Peace and Happiness through prosperity" concepts). But this should not detract from the decadelong self-sacrifice, boundless drive, cost cutting and risk taking which he undertook during his professional life to create a leading world electronics conglomerate, which only started to stumble once he exited from this world. Kotter has researched well and writes engagingly. The book is definitely worth a read, if only to understand Japanese corporate history and its past entrepreneurial culture of the last century.

Inspiring narrative of an individual who was born into poverty and became the leading industrialist of Japan.

This is a rare attempt by an American to profile an Asian entrepreneur and world-renowned corporate leader. Because of the rather more subtle and complex social structures in Asia, which is

particularly even more so in Japan, it is the rare non-Asian who is able to peer through the intricate webs and be able to grasp at the essence. Kudos to John Kotter

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