



The Secret: What Great Leaders Know & Do

By Ken Blanchard and Mark Miller

Reviewed by Steve Casbon, February 2015

One of the great privileges of my recent past, along with about 900 other men and women from 50 countries around the world, was hearing Mark Miller, a Sr. VP at Chik-fil-a, address the audience of the CBMC World Convention in September of 2014. Mark did a wonderful job of explaining the SERVE model which is what great leaders know and do and the featured subject matter of the book *The Secret*.

The Secret is a profoundly easy read, yet delivered in a story form that is captivating to the very end. It is about a mid-level manager, Debbie Brewster, who applies and is awarded with the opportunity to be part of the company's new mentorship program. Much to Debbie's amazement, her mentor will be the company President, Jeff Brown. Debbie becomes further amazed when Jeff's assistant contacts her to schedule their first mentoring session and offers to schedule the meeting at a convenient time for Debbie. The book leads Debbie through an array of surprises that go against most all of her pre-conceived notions about mentoring, the style of the company President, Jeff Brown, and profound truths that she discovers throughout her mentorship program.

From the very first mentoring session, Debbie was surprised by the way Jeff took an interest in Debbie's personal life and encouraged her to do the same with those on her team. Debbie was not understanding how this could help her or her team achieve better results. She later understands how this idea of taking a personal interest in those we serve is a foundation for helping them to more effectively in all aspects of their life. Another question perplexed Debbie from the time she filled out her application to be part of the mentorship program which she ends her first mentoring session with; "What is the secret of great leaders?" The intrigue of this question is pervasive throughout the book and is what fuels Debbie's interest throughout this mentoring opportunity with the company President, Jeff Brown.

Another key element that is used to develop this story line is the conversations that Debbie has with her husband John throughout. The innermost thoughts, values, and learning insights of Debbie are revealed during these conversations and are useful in keeping the readers interest until the very end.



Each mentoring session builds upon another, usually leaving Debbie with more questions that she started with. During one of her first several mentoring sessions, Jeff revealed to Debbie the concept of being vs doing. He also compared the notion that in leadership that the skills portion was the doing part, and that character was the being part. Jeff also explains that character and being were part of the 80% of the iceberg that was below the surface and that the doing and skills were the 20% of the iceberg that was visible and above the surface. He further explained that it was the character of the leader that makes them effective. Although it is a good idea to hire leaders that have both character and skills, if they ever have to choose between character and skills, that character will win every time. Jeff also revealed to Debbie that great leaders SERVE.

Much of the rest of the story describes in detail about the **SERVE** model of leadership which is: “**S**” is for **See** the future, “**E**” for **Engage** and develop others, “**R**” for **Reinvent** continuously, “**V**” for **Value** results and relationships, and “**E**” for **Embody** the values. It is well worth the read to find out more about these values and how they are modeled and carried out in the story.

From the very beginning of the journey through a wonderful discovery process Debbie displays the character of great leaders as she learns to listen, invest time, care deeply, and accentuate the positive for those on her team. As Debbie learned and began to implement these leadership qualities into her team, the performance of her team began to escalate to become one of the top producing teams within the company. Ironically enough, Debbie’s team went from below average results to peak performance as did Debbie’s understanding of how to lead and what makes leaders effective. The reward for Debbie’s growth in her leadership modeling and performance is the opportunity to head up the Leadership Development within the company offered to her by her mentor and company President, Jeff Brown. Debbie accepts the position and begins practicing the very critical process of passing the baton of leadership.

If you are interested in a value based system of servant leadership that is delivered in an entertaining discovery based story form that will warm your heart, then **The Secret, What Great Leaders Know and Do** is a must read for you.