

# APRIL FRAZIER

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### The Background

Goal: Create a blog post that shares a recommended leadership reading list, write a compelling, story-driven email that invites the audience to read it, and select an accompanying blog post image.

### The Blog Post Copy + Image



## **3 BOOKS EVERY NONPROFIT LEADER SHOULD READ**

“Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

This is a famous opening line from Anna Karenina that highlights a truth about organizations of all kinds: successful organizations share the same key characteristics, unsuccessful organizations are unique in their challenges.

Navigating unique challenges is especially true for nonprofit organizations that often aim to change the world in some way. These organizations are doing what hasn’t been done. Yet.

Thus, nonprofit leaders at all levels are presented with a unique challenge. They typically serve organizations where there is plenty of passion, not enough money, and there is no done-for-you cheatsheet on how to create a strategic path to success, because each organization and each mission is a signature.

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But the uncertainty creates opportunity. The best leaders rise to see the possibilities, practice continuous alignment to the vision, and empathically create teams who value adaptability and continuous improvement over simply “getting to done” because for organizations doing work as a demonstration of great care for the world, the work is never done. Strong, learning leaders know this in their bones.

The recommended reading list that follows is curated specifically for such leaders who are “in the hunt” as the rising quarterbacks of progressive change that will influence the world for generations to come.

This is not a stodgy list of business books about case studies, statistics, history, and facts. Instead, it is a subset of books from our list (we could name more, just ask us!) that aims to provoke a nonprofit leader to view the unique challenges of their organization as an opportunity to think differently and to design creative, unique-as-a-fingerprint solutions.

In short, this is our “alt list”.

### 1. PIVOT YEAR

Becoming a leader is a moving target. It is more of a journey than a destination. Learning leaders who lean into continuous improvement for the organizations that they serve likewise lean into conscious self-development and growth. After all, you cannot lead anyone somewhere that you have never been.

There are numerous self-development books out there, but The Pivot Year is a standout that every leader could read every year and still walk away with a new point of growth. Few books keep giving with each read. But, THIS is one of those books.

### 2. ALCHEMY: THE DARK ART AND CURIOUS SCIENCE OF CREATING MAGIC IN BRANDS, BUSINESS, AND LIFE

There is a curious, hidden truth about a certain color that we all recognize. It doesn't really exist. But, don't tell that to your brain. This witty, right-brained, comedic take on the importance of thinking differently is right at home on any nonprofit leader's bookshelf as a beacon that, as stated in the book, “The trouble with logic is that it kills off magic.”

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## 3. RADICAL CANDOR - HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT BY SAYING WHAT YOU MEAN

Written by Kim Scott, former CEO coach at Dropbox and Twitter and executive at Google and Apple, who draws on her experience to provide clear and honest guidance on leadership that begins with the relationships you build. She lays out the principles of radical candor as a leadership style that leads with empathy, but not “ruinous empathy”. This book is a stirring call to action for any leader who desires to have frank and sometimes difficult conversations in a way that leaves everyone with their dignity and that empowers teams to move confidently forward.

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### The Email

Here is the email sent to accompany the blog post.

Subject line: When the stuff literally hits the wall

Preheader text: Nothing is going according to plan...

This is a true story.

It was his first day as a new manager and opening night of a new restaurant in a casino on a fight night, so the casino was full to the brim. The line of reservations and walk-ins snaked around the corner and spilled into the gambling room. And as usual in high-pressure situations, nothing was going according to plan.

“We have a problem. It’s the bathroom.” The hostess had called Sanjeev to the front and cautiously whispered to him the bad news.

Other employees hovered around, mingling amongst the customers, holding their breath. They all knew.

Sanjeev goes into the bathroom to investigate. He smells the problem before he even opens the door. It was horrible. There was feces in and around the toilet. There was feces on the wall, the floor, and the stall door.

This is not merely an accident of the intestines. This is a test.

He comes out of the bathroom. Anxious eyes question him, but quickly avert his gaze. Who is he going to send to clean up the mess? He tells his team that the bathroom is closed until the problem is resolved. Then he puts on a mask and gloves. He grabs the disinfectant and other cleaning supplies and heads back into the bathroom.

A moment later, he hears the bathroom door open. Without stopping, he says from within the stall: “The bathroom is closed!”

Thirty seconds later, the bathroom door opens again. He yells the warning again, annoyed that someone has entered the bathroom. He doesn’t want any customer to see this bathroom blow-up catastrophe.

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Yet again, the bathroom door opens. Near panic, he pokes his head out of the stall this time to see three members of his team suited and holding cleaning supplies.

One of them says to him, “We can’t let you do this by yourself.”

Sanjeev doesn’t realize it at the moment, but he has just demonstrated LEADERSHIP, as defined by a demonstration of that special mix of characteristics that cause others to voluntarily rally to the Call of the Cause.

As he shared his story, I marveled at how simple the solution was. Sometimes leaders struggle because they feel like they are supposed to know everything and have all of the answers. But, in fact, leadership is quite simple, although not always easy, once you understand this:

Believe it or not, leadership does not require confidence. Confidence is a RESULT, not a requisite of taking action. (Read that again.)

Leadership sits at the center of these qualities:

- The humility to step up when others hesitate (which may require sacrificing yourself)
- The empathy to treat others as you want them to treat you
- A strong desire to do the right thing

It really is that simple, but only if you practice. How do you practice these three qualities?

Here are 3 books that every non-profit leader should read.