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THE POWER OF LEO
The Revolutionary Process for Achieving
Extraordinary Results

By Subir Chowdhury

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“Nobody knows quality like Subir Chowdhury, and **THE POWER OF LEO** reveals the elegant new approach he has pioneered with the world’s top companies. I couldn’t recommend this book more.”

– Marshall Goldsmith, bestselling author of *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*

New Book Puts The Power of LEO – Listen, Enrich, and Optimize –
At Organizations’ Fingertips, Challenging Everyone, From CEOs To
Frontline Workers, To Make Quality Their Top Priority

“America is engaged in a global quality war – and we’re losing. We lead in innovation, and we get to market first, but within a matter of months our overseas rivals are eating our lunch,” declares Subir Chowdhury, a leading quality expert whose clients include Fortune 100 companies as well as smaller organizations, both public and private. In his new book, **THE POWER OF LEO: The Revolutionary Process for Achieving Extraordinary Results** (McGraw Hill/ October 2011), Chowdhury reveals a groundbreaking concept that enables companies to achieve quality at all levels. Called LEO – Listen, Enrich, and Optimize – Chowdhury’s method represents a transformational new mindset that will revolutionize the decisions managers make and the actions they take, dramatically improving performance by making quality part of the corporate DNA.

In examining the business landscape in the early 2000s, Chowdhury recognized that most companies fail to achieve more than marginal gains in quality, despite trying an abundance of management tools, from reengineering to Six Sigma. “We needed to make a significant departure from past practice,” Chowdhury explains, “to approach quality and performance improvement in a way that takes into account an in-depth understanding of a company’s

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goals, culture, and core strengths and weaknesses.” Hence, LEO was born – and has since proved itself over and over again with companies of every size and kind.

“LEO can find answers to the questions that plague managers everywhere,” Chowdhury writes. “Why are my sales dropping off? What can I do about my excessive scrap? How do I reduce high turnover? How can I match my competitor’s price? Why is my new product pipeline empty?” Ultimately, he asserts, the answers to all these questions boil down to one word: quality. LEO’s game-changing approach is comprised of three basic elements:

Listen: Observe and Understand – To obtain a deep understanding of the issue at hand, assumptions must be put aside and interaction with all relevant parties – including customers, suppliers, and employees – is critical. “You must get up close and personal and go to the source,” explains Chowdhury. That could be the factory floor, a call center, or a customer’s home. And listening is not only about asking questions, but about observing – whether that means watching a worker perform a task or a customer use a product.

Enrich: Explore and Discover – Once the real nature of the problem is uncovered, the next phase is about searching for the best solution. Chowdhury advocates a special type of brainstorming session that encourages people to relax and try to come up with numerous ideas, no matter how far-fetched they may seem. An informal environment where every idea receives a full and respectful hearing is key. “To get the most out of the Enrich process, you need to embrace change and the idea that what you have now, and what you have done up to this point, simply isn’t good enough,” the author writes.

Optimize: Improve and Perfect – During this phase, participants review the solutions that have already been proposed. They look for flaws and find ways to improve the solutions, making them even more effective. This is a step that some organizations think they can skip. But it is essential, because good-enough no longer works, contends Chowdhury. Everyone needs to strive for the highest quality possible. “If you want to turn out the kind of products or services that will truly delight your customers and attract new ones, you need to keep raising the bar on quality,” he writes. Once the Optimize stage is complete, and only then, can the solutions be implemented.

In **THE POWER OF LEO**, Chowdhury uses detailed case histories of many different types of companies – from an automobile manufacturer, to a hospital, to a candy factory – to show how the LEO approach has been used in real business situations. LEO is equally effective whether a company faces a “Fire” – a specific, often sudden problem in any area of the organization, such as inconsistent product quality that seems to come out of nowhere; a “Flow” issue – something ongoing on the operations side of the company, such as a process that is creating a bottleneck in production; or a “Future” issue – anything to do with the creation of new processes, products, or services.

Ultimately, the LEO mindset can bring great rewards, not only as an organizational methodology, but also as a personal strategy, contends Chowdhury. “We can spend our lives just getting by, or we can strive for quality in everything we do,” he writes. If LEO is to transform a company, leaders and frontline employees alike must acquire a high-quality mindset – marked by such characteristics as honesty, empathy, and resistance to compromise. Even more fundamentally, Chowdhury advocates implementing the basic ideas behind LEO in everyday life. As he says in his book, “Listen hard to others and to yourself. Enrich the lives around you by giving a little more every day; Optimize everything you do by setting your mind to excellence.”

Year after year, while proclaiming a commitment to quality, Americans go on devising flawed processes and turning out flawed products and services, Chowdhury contends. The LEO approach enables any organization to truly commit to and achieve an unprecedented level of quality. **THE POWER OF LEO** provides the step-by-step tools executives and managers need to put this transformative method to work for them.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SUBIR CHOWDHURY is Chairman and CEO of ASI Consulting Group, LLC, a world leader on LEO and Quality leadership implementation, consulting, and training. Hailed by *The New York Times* as a “leading quality expert” and by *BusinessWeek* as “The Quality Prophet,” Chowdhury is the author of thirteen books, including the international bestsellers *The Power of Six Sigma* and *The Ice Cream Maker*. He has received numerous international awards for his leadership in quality management. Chowdhury lives with his wife and two children in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.