

Book

The Leadership

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Our top five book picks

The Answer to How Is Yes: The Acting on What Matters

Peter Block (ISBN: 1576751686)

Reviewed by: Julia Cipriani

Do not look to Peter Block for quick tips, tricks, or techniques. He will, however, provide a rich perspective on why so many organizations and the people who live and work in them are seeking the doable and the practical.

At the beginning of his book Block proposes a moratorium on the question 'How?' for 6 months. We would be forced to have conversations about what matters in our lives and our institutions. The fundamental conversations about purpose and whether something is worth doing get lost in the quest for answers, data, and means. Block believes that "How do you do it?" is an expression of our internal doubt rather than curiosity about the mechanics of how to do something. He sees 'Yes' as the antithesis of 'How?' 'Yes' reflects our willingness to commit and participate in something that matters and avoids the trap of looking for solutions before we have determined whether it is even worth doing.

The question, "How long will it take?" can be translated into, "What commitment am I willing to make?"; "How much will it cost?" into "What am I willing to pay?"; "How are others doing this?" into "What do we want to create together?" In short, good questions work on us, we do not work on them (p.39). Although the 'how?' questions are important, he cautions us that they should not be the first questions asked.

In our quest to balance what works with what matters, there are three values – idealism, intimacy, and depth – which must be explored. The exploration is a difficult proposition in a culture that values all things measurable and profitable. Block charts a course for deepening our understanding of ourselves and our own thinking. He examines the structures in many of our organizations

that make it more challenging for us to act with full responsibility.

His closing draws on his view of the archetypes that shape our beliefs, our views, our thoughts, our stance, and who we might become – the engineer, the economist, the artist, and the architect. All of the archetypes bring valuable perspectives. However, most organizational strategies come from the partnership between the economist and the engineer, relying heavily on pragmatic, cost-efficient, predictable approaches to being successful in the market. The artist brings a concern for what matters, an interest in possibilities and gives a voice to feelings and matters of the heart. The architect embodies all of the values of the other three – function, cost effectiveness, purpose and form. The collective possibility is the social architect – "to design and bring into being organizations that serve the marketplace and the soul of the people working in them." (p.171)

Other books by Block: *The Empowered Manager*, *Stewardship*, *Flawless Consulting* and *Flawless Consulting Fieldbook and Companion*. He co-authored *Freedom and Accountability at Work* with Peter Koestenbaum.

How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day

Michael Gelb (ISBN: 0385323816)

Reviewed by: Andre Mamprin

Drawing from the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, arguably one of the most ingenious and innovative humans in history, author Michael Gelb brings Leonardo da Vinci's seven core principles to life in a fresh and highly interactive way. These principles include: Curiosita, an insatiably curious approach to life and an unrelenting quest for continuous learning; Dimostrazione, a commitment to test knowledge through experience, persistence and a willingness to learn from mistakes;

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Sensazione, the continual refinement of the senses, especially sight, as the means to enliven experience; Sfumato, a willingness to embrace ambiguity, paradox and uncertainty; Arte/Scienza, the development of the balance between science and art, logic and imagination, whole brain thinking; Corporalita, the cultivation of grace, ambidexterity, fitness, and poise; and finally Connessione, a recognition and appreciation of all things and phenomena (Systems Thinking). Gelb makes the highly complex world and thought of the master Leonardo da Vinci highly accessible to all of us. This work is sure to open for the reader a gate of new possibilities in dealing with our traditional ways of seeing, perceiving and being. Its relevance is in developing and enhancing our creative capacity, an essential part of developing people and organizations in the knowledge economy.

The Leadership Mystique: A Users Manual for the Human Enterprise

Manfred Kets De Vries (ISBN: 0273656201)

Reviewed by: Andre Mamprin

Leadership Mystique is a solid contemporary look at contemporary leadership issues. From a starting premise that the world, organizations and – arguably – us humans, continue to change and evolve, our central paradigms are shifting also. Notions such as Emotional Intelligence in the world of work are emerging as a new reality. Kets De Vries looks at the behaviours of the leaders of the companies that endure and offers a tight perspective on what this looks like. Kets De Vries dispels the myths of executive behaviour and identifies some startling patterns of dysfunction in the current leadership structures. In Chapter 5, "The Dynamics of Succession," arguably one of the most powerful chapters written on a significant emerging issue, succession, he looks at the life cycle of a CEO and makes a strong case for what he terms generational envy. Kets De Vries looks at the characteristics of effective leadership, the roles leaders play, and how to achieve personal and organizational change. The author also takes a close look at Leadership Development and the characteristics of what he calls "Authentizotic" organizations. Although somewhat heady, Kets De Vries' work is chock full of models and tools. It is a highly practical work that covers the concept of leadership from a broad perspective. It is both timely and highly relevant to today's modern leadership challenges.

The Story Factor: Inspiration, Influence, and Persuasion through the Art of Storytelling

Annette Simmons (ISBN: 0738206717)

Reviewed by: Andre Mamprin

In the emerging era of The Learning Organization and the practice of Knowledge Management, Simmons' book on storytelling lends a whole new perspective to transmitting knowledge, learning, communicating more effectively, and the critical art of persuasion. The author eloquently illustrates the power of a story, what a story does, the psychology behind a story's influence, along with the do's and don'ts of effective storytelling. Simmons looks at the mechanics of effective storytelling. Her descriptive variations on the six types of stories, Who I Am stories, Why I'm Here stories, The Vision stories, Teaching stories, Values-in-Action stories, and I Know What You Are Thinking stories add a layer of richness to the prospect of prompting the reader to see stories as effective tools in the art of communication and persuasion. I would offer this book as a terrific adjunct to the many technology-biased books pertaining to Knowledge Management, with a softer, more essential human side.

The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace: How to Select For, Measure, and Improve Emotional Intelligence in Individuals, Groups, and Organizations

Cary Cherniss & Daniel Goleman (ISBN: 0787956902)

Reviewed by: Laurie Hillis

Daniel Goleman has popularized the field of emotional intelligence (EQ) in recent years. In this book he and co-editor Cary Cherniss bring together viewpoints of leading researchers in the field to examine the expanded premise of emotional intelligence from a purely individual context to one that benefits group or organizational learning. This inventive compendium examines the numerous conceptual and strategic issues involved in defining, measuring, and promoting emotional intelligence in organizations. The book's contributing authors (members of the Consortium for Research on EI in Organizations) share fifteen models that have been field-tested and empirically validated in existing organizations. Their twenty-two guidelines for promoting emotional intelligence, while somewhat scientific, ground the reader in the complexities of using emotional intelligence (EQ) in organizations. Not for the faint of heart, but definitely a wealth of contemporary theories, concepts and models.