New and Noteworthy

Back to the Classics: A Library Leader's Basic Management Bookshelf

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Many of us practicing library managers did not set out on our careers with library leadership in mind. Management is not generally a topic emphasized in most library and information science programs, so we have to learn as we go. Of course, being librarians, we naturally turn to what others have written on the topic. In this month's "New and Noteworthy" column, we depart from the "new" and review four classic titles on management and leadership.

The One Minute Manager,[1] an enormously popular guidebook when it was first published in 1982, aims to be for management what William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White's *Elements of Style* is for writing. The text is a quick read, only 110 pages in the original edition, and has sold over 13 million copies worldwide.[2] Presented as an allegory, the book outlines one young professional's search for a model of an effective manager, one who isn't either too tough or too nice.

Effective management technique is a simple process, according to authors Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson. Good managers set brief, clear goals for their employees; expect them to solve their own problems; look for chances to praise; and are prompt about providing feedback when performance is low. The "one minute" theme is "intended to remind each of us to take a minute out of our day to look into the faces of the people we manage. And to realize that they are our most important resources" (5). These minutes are to be spent in a three-part process: one-minute goals, one-minute praisings, and one-minute reprimands. The One-Minute Manager's "game plan" begins with setting an employee's goals. If the goals are achieved, the manager proceeds to praisings; if not, reprimands. The cycle then repeats.

The One Minute Manager, although dated, remains a worthwhile, if simplistic primer on basic management techniques. Several affirmations from the book have entered common management vernacular, such as "People who feel good about themselves produce good results" (19); "help people reach their full potential – catch them doing something right" (38) and "Everyone is a potential winner. Some people are disguised as losers, don't let their appearances fool you" (71). However, some readers may find that the stilted narrative style interferes with the book's message. Somewhat ironically, were the book to be distilled to its essential points (which are helpfully presented in a flowchart on page 101), it wouldn't take much longer than one minute to read.

The One Minute Manager illustrates a common theme among the most popular management books of the last few decades: an emphasis on the effective management of an organization's human resources. A worthwhile question to ask in this regard is, "What makes people 'smart?'" In 1995, psychologist and science journalist Daniel Goleman published *Emotional Intelligence,*[3]

a book which expanded on the idea that traditional intelligence (i.e., IQ) alone is not a reliable indicator of happiness and success. Just as important, if not more so, is how people effectively handle their emotions in their work and personal lives. In *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*,[4] Goleman teams up with emotional intelligence (EI) experts Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee to translate EI theories to management practice.

According to the authors, 50 to 70% of employee perception of the overall climate of the workplace depends on the actions of management (18). A leader's actions, in turn, depend heavily on his or her own emotional state. Thus, rather than try to isolate one's emotions from work, an "emotionally intelligent" leader thoughtfully integrates those emotions into day-to-day business. According to the authors, "Quite simply, in any human group the leader has maximal power to sway everyone's emotions. If people's emotions are pushed toward the range of enthusiasm, performance can soar; if people are driven toward rancor and anxiety, they will be thrown off stride" (5). A truly effective manager is one who creates an atmosphere of "resonant leadership," an integration of the four basic intelligence domains of EI (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management). Further, each domain (helpfully summarized in Appendix 2) is comprised of several competencies (19 in all), such as self-confidence, adaptability, transparency, empathy, organizational awareness, and so on. The balance of these competencies makes for six varying leadership styles, four of which are resonant (visionary, coaching, affiliative and democratic), and two dissonant (pacesetting and commanding).

A possible shortcoming of the book is the lack of practical tools (such as self-assessments and scenarios) to help the reader identify his or her own personal level of resonant leadership. However, the last section is particularly useful as it moves from the personal development of EI to describe that of the organizational culture itself. A healthy, efficient organization springs from the ability of its members to first analyze the current state of how the organization functions and then determine how closely it matches their own personal visions. "Once there's an understanding of the emotional reality and norms of teams and the culture of an organization," the authors state, "it can be used as a basis from which to develop the ideal vision for the group, which, to be truly captivating, must also be in tune with each individual's personal vision" (173).

Of course, not every organization achieves a high level of group awareness; in some cases, organizational culture itself gets in the way of people doing their best work. Does your organization have a learning disability? A key problem with many work environments, according to MIT's Peter M. Senge in *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*,[5] is their similarity to the traditional "sage on the stage" K-12 classroom. Quoting management pioneer W. Edwards Deming, Senge writes, "'The relationship between a boss and subordinate is the same as the relationship between a teacher and student,' he said. The teacher sets the aims, the student responds to those aims...Students know when they have succeeded because the teacher tells them" (xiii).

Enter the learning organization, which is designed to break through old mental models and help keep the organization agile and responsive to trends. The key idea here is that everyone in the organization needs to be in the learning mindset; it is inadequate to depend on an individual or a

group of senior administrators tasked with development. "It's just not possible any longer to figure it out from the top, and have everyone else following the orders of the 'grand strategist,'" write Senge, "The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization" (4). To that end, Senge describes five key disciplines to be mastered at all levels of the learning organization: personal mastery, shared vision, mental models, team learning, and systems thinking, the last discipline serving to integrate the previous four.

In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge taps into the human tendency towards continuous self-improvement, beginning with the individual and demonstrating how individual learning directly leads to a stronger organizational team. It is an entertaining as well as enlightening read, containing numerous examples, stories, and case studies, and the footnotes will lead the reader to other excellent leadership titles.

The theme of individual development is also a major focus of the enormously popular, best-selling self-help book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*,[6] by motivational speaker and writer Stephen R. Covey. Although the original book is not specifically written for a business audience, it is generally considered to be a top recommendation for leadership reading.[7]   In *The 7 Habits*, Covey introduces a personal and professional management system on the foundation of seven common-sense, sequential tips to self-improvement.

The first step in developing the seven habits is to develop a paradigm shift, or a basic change in one's personal and professional perspective. Once the reader recognizes that change is a viable option, he or she is ready for the move from dependence to interdependence. This is accomplished through the first three habits: be proactive, begin with the end in mind, and put first things first. The next three habits contribute to a sense of interdependence, or working with others: think win-win; seek first to understand, then to be understood; and synergize. Finally, the reader is encouraged to work on continuous, lifelong improvement by "sharpening the saw," or paying attention to work-life balance through positive and sustainable health, intellectual and spiritual practices.

Covey, who passed away in 2011,[8] remains a major influence in the business and management self-help movement. Many of his maxims, for example, "begin with the end in mind" and "put first things first" have entered the self-help vernacular, and the Stephen R. Covey Company continues to offer consulting and training services.[9]

Of course, these four basic titles barely scratch the surface of key management readings for library leaders. What is on YOUR essential leadership bookshelf? Each month, in addition to a regular theme, this column will feature other classic leadership books. We invite you to suggest a title or two and perhaps a brief description of why you find them valuable. We look forward to hearing from you!

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[1] Blanchard, Kenneth and Spencer Johnson. *The One-Minute Manager*. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1982.

[2] The statistic comes from Dr. Blanchard's website at http://www.kenblanchard.com/, which also lists several follow-up books to *The One-Minute Manager*, including *Putting the One Minute Manager to Work* (1984), *The One Minute Entrepreneur* (2008), and *The One Minute Manager Balances Work and Life* (1999).

[3] Goleman, Daniel. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. New York: Bantam, 1995.

[4] Goleman, Daniel. *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001.

[5] Senge, Peter M. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1990.

[6] Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.

[7] See, for example, "The 25 Most Influential Business Management Books," an August 2011 list published by *Time* magazine, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2086680_2086683_2086684,00.html.

[8] Martin, Douglas. Stephen R. Covey, Herald of Good Habits, Dies at 79. *New York Times* (July 16, 2012). Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/17/business/stephen-r-covey-herald-of-good-habits-dies-at-79.html?smid=pl-share

[9] More information about Covey books and products, including the FranklinCovey leadership training series, may be found at the Stephen R. Covey website, https://www.stephencovey.com. Follow-up titles to the original book include *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (New York: Free Press, 2004) and *The Leader in Me: How Schools and Parents Around the World Are Inspiring Greatness, One Child at a Time* (New York: Free Press, 2008).