

Recent Literature in Management and Leadership -- Selected Reviews

by [Kathryn J. Deiss](#), Program Officer for Training

Many have presumed that the literature on management and leadership topics peaked at approximately the same time that business school admissions began to level off. However, what we are experiencing is a veritable publishing explosion of books on these subjects varying widely in quality and type. Below are reviews of three of the best recent books that may have immediate practical use for leaders and managers in libraries.

Creating Effective Teams

Tools for Team Excellence: Getting Your Team Into High Gear and Keeping It There by Gregory E. Huszczo (Davies-Black Publishing, 1996), helps organizations think through, from inception to action, the steps involved in creating effective teams. Huszczo is professor of Organizational Behavior and Development in the Management Department of Eastern Michigan University, and a consultant in both the public and private sectors. Publication by the publishing arm of Consulting Psychologists, the organization that produces the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) instruments, might raise the question of editorial perspective. However, this book is remarkably practical in its intent and, though there is a section on MBTI and teams, it by no means dominates the author's perspective.

Huszczo includes numerous exercises as well as case studies to help teams and team members learn and grow in their new relationships to one another and to their organization's work. His chapter, "Preparing Organizations for Teams," is one of the most thoughtful and complete in all of the literature on teams. He then moves through preparing team members for change, key components of effective teams, identifying and developing individual and team talent, task-role clarification, problem-solving, constructive interpersonal relationships, and evaluation. Organizations that have teams or are moving toward teams should seek out this volume. Additionally, all organizations should look at it, whether they are organized by teams or not, since Huszczo so clearly steps through the thinking process that should occur in organizing any group of people to perform work.

The Role of the Manager

Stop Managing, Start Coaching! How Performance Coaching Can Enhance Commitment and Improve Productivity by Jerry W. Gilley and Nathaniel W. Boughton (Richard D. Irwin, 1996), looks at the manager's essential role as one of coach. Gilley is professor of Human Resource Development at Western Michigan University, and Boughton is a Human Resource Management Consultant in Atlanta. This book will be useful to all managers regardless of administrative level. It may be of most use to assistant/associate university librarians, department heads and/or team leaders, and human resource officers. *Stop Managing, Start Coaching* is designed as a handbook to performance coaching. While some elements of this new coaching role, such as feedback giving, have been discussed before, some areas that have been discussed less frequently, such as training and confronting, are also explained in detail. The chapters include models, step-by-step suggestions, and explanations of disciplines not common to managers, such as using transfer of learning strategies to improve performance.

A unique part of *Stop Managing, Start Coaching* is a discussion of the need to reengineer the human

resource development process. Most books on management, especially handbook types of books, do not speak to the human resource development activities that may be part of the larger organization and by which individual managers are governed, restrained, or empowered in their efforts to coach employees reporting directly to them.

This book presents a fresh look at the essential and evolving role of the manager. It can be recommended for the directness of its explication and for the meaningfulness of the coaching role as organizations move toward the learning organization model.

Importance of Learning

Speaking to the importance of learning is *Learning as a Way of Being* by Peter Vaill (Jossey-Bass, 1996). Peter Vaill is known to many as the author of the book *Managing as a Performing Art* (Jossey-Bass, 1989). He is professor of human systems and the Director of the Ph.D. program at the School of Business and Public Management, George Washington University, and a well-known speaker and consultant. In his new book, *Learning as a Way of Being*, Vaill challenges our preconceptions about learning -- and teaching/training/instructing. His view is that institutionalized learning, while worthy, does not create empowered learners nor a true existence of continual learning. Students in MBA programs, participants in adult learning courses, and members of organizations in training programs are all learners in an institutionalized learning setting; here, the expedient "right answer" takes the place of active inquiry, deep and self-directed exploration, and testing on the part of each individual.

In this book, one of the most important management books of the decade, he calls on us to collectively and individually learn to learn differently -- continually -- in order to effectively navigate the "permanent white water" of change we find ourselves in. He also proposes that continual learning should be a constant -- a "state of being."

His choice of the word "being" in the title is quite purposeful -- he uses it to describe the "whole" person. This includes everyday existence at work and outside of work, conscious awarenesses and the unconscious itself. He further explores the metaphor, introduced in *Managing as a Performing Art*, of "permanent white water" to describe the ever-changing environment. His premise is that permanent white water introduces novel situations that require us to act in ways we may never have thought of before or in combinations of ways which introduce further change. His proposition that we can do this by treating learning as a state of being, is a compelling proposition. The premise implies the use of personal skills to assess completely new situations -- powers of observation, introspection, and knowledge gained from previous experiences.

This is not only a practical and inspiring book for leaders, consultants, educators, and trainers, but it is essential to the literature that supports the concepts underlying the learning organization.

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