

8 Paradoxes of Leadership Agility: How to Lead and Inspire in the Real World

Yeo Chuen Chuen

Acesence (May 31, 2020)

Softcover \$28.00 (192pp)

978-981-145846-0

8 Paradoxes of Leadership Agility is a compelling business advice book that encourages adaptation and balance.

Yeo Chuen Chuen's engaging personal development book *8 Paradoxes of Leadership Agility* contains useful advice for navigating contemporary leadership challenges.

This well-organized text begins by defining Chuen's four-step coaching method through difficulties like resistance to particular visions for the future or difficult bosses. This method includes strategies such as reconstructing a map, wherein leaders subject themselves to a reality check: owning up to their own failings and mistakes; weeding out biases; and shifting to new identities. The intriguing shifts in identity involve personalized anchoring metaphors, a masterful and creative stroke that forces the audience to derive meaning from their own experiences.

The text then presents eight paradoxes, such as weighing enforcing changes against empowering employees; it introduces Yeo Chuen Chuen's own clients as case studies. Each client confronts a particular problem, and the book shares the work that was done to overcome them. The text closes with a workbook to help leaders identify where they struggle and steps to take to fix issues. This approach is logical and is supported by attractive infographics and highlighted themes to help with understanding each paradox.

A claim is made that each of the book's paradoxes are applicable across a broad range of situations, "irrespective of differences in nationalities, cultures, ages, genders, academic and industry backgrounds." In service of this notion, a range of personal stories are shared, their challenges reflective of a diverse cross section of businesspeople. Willingness to adapt tactics and strategies to meet real world challenges is encouraged, bolstered by a story about a woman working to change a large institution, but who was forced to admit the limits of her own power. Such examples point to the intersection of theory with concrete actions and mix elements of interviews, observations, and narratives.

From this perspective, effective leaders have to master agility and adjust to changes as they come. A strong argument is made that leaders negotiate a host of competing priorities, with corresponding examples. But the book asserts that it is possible to both face change and to stay true to oneself: an anecdote about a woman choosing when to remain "principled," and when to adapt to move forward in her career, reinforces this. Fresh insights arise, and the book has a balanced approach to achieving personal career goals.

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JEREMIAH ROOD (June 5, 2020)

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