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All I Know About Management I Learned from My Dog

Martin P. Levin
Skyhorse Publishing (April 2011)
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Two favorite topics in books these days are management and dogs—so, Martin Levin must have thought, why not combine them.

The concept of learning management from a dog may not be as far-fetched as it sounds. Levin adopted a dog named Angel late in life and realized that "my best resource for managing Angel would be, unexpectedly, the six decades of experience I had had in a variety of management positions and the principles I had learned in the process." In turn, Levin's adventures with Angel led him to develop what he says are the four "Golden Rules" of management: Trust & Leadership, Communication, Problem Solving & Decision Making, and Perseverance.

Levin addresses the Golden Rules in the context of Angel, relating them loosely to business management principles. For example, in discussing Rule Three, Problem Solving & Decision Making, Levin writes that Angel has her own way of problem solving. He uses a stuck bone to illustrate, suggesting that Angel can identify alternatives ("Growling did not move the bone; try master") and come up with an action plan ("Run up and down to get attention and help. Master moves bone to the rug"). This is a novel way to demonstrate how human managers must solve problems.

Throughout the book, the author weaves Angel's tale with stories about his past work and life experiences, as well as people he has known. (Some, like Stephen King, will be recognizable to the reader.) In this respect, the book represents a memoir. While Levin's reminiscing is at times relevant, it can also be somewhat of a distraction from the focus on the lessons the author has learned from Angel.

One of the more charming aspects of the book is the photography by Tiffany Schwarz. Schwarz captures Angel in a number of poses and with a variety of expressions. Images of Angel are scattered strategically throughout, often appearing at the beginning and end of chapters. This brings the dog to life and greatly enhances the text.

At the end we learn that Angel has reached the ripe old age of fifteen and, despite some health problems, she has persevered—which is the last of the Golden Rules. Levin writes that he will use the royalties from the sale of the book to establish an "Angel Fund" that will make contributions to the shelter from which he adopted Angel, as well as to a treatment center that helped her.

The premise of the book may be a bit contrived—it isn't entirely believable that Angel taught the author "*all* I know about management." It is clear, however, that Angel has taught Martin Levin much about the unconditional companionship, loyalty, and love only a dog can give to a human.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (May / June 2011)

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