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Awaken, Align, Accelerate: A Guide to Great Leadership

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This *Guide to Great Leadership* is based on a strategic framework, created by MDA Leadership Consulting, which mirrors the title of the book—*Awaken, Align, Accelerate*. According to the editors, the guide is intended for three specific groups of leaders: “self-developing leaders,” coaches, and those in human resources.

Following an introductory section that outlines leadership fundamentals and explains the framework, the book is divided into six key areas: Leading People, Thinking and Deciding, Achieving, Relating to People, Managing Work, and Managing Self. Each of these six areas is part of a larger Leadership Competency Model that provides the underlying structure for the book.

Chapters within a section are carefully structured to support both the section and the model. The chapter, Innovation and Risk-Taking, for example, is part of the Achieving section. This chapter details “How Leaders at Different Levels Innovate and Take Risks,” includes a Self-Assessment exercise (present in most other chapters), and offers specific development suggestions based on the answers to the exercise that may involve experimentation, improvement, creativity, or challenge. The chapter also includes information to help the reader coach others on innovation and risk-taking, plus a detailed case study that demonstrates how one particular leader “realized the risks of not innovating,” and provides a detailed development plan for the individual.

The editors of the book drew upon many in the MDA Leadership Consulting firm for content. The result is a rich compilation of materials but delivered in a consistent and easy to read final product. The editors make superb use of visual aids as well. The graphic of the Leadership Competency Model is helpful in depicting all of its component parts. Each chapter is identified in the book via tabs on the sides of the pages. Charts are well designed and subheads stand out. Bullets, call-outs, and a second color are all used skillfully to enhance the readability of the text.

An appendix provides a summary of factors, competencies, and core practices, a list of case studies, and sample development tools, including a high performance environment survey, a worksheet for external environment analysis, a strategic innovation worksheet, and a leadership reputation exercise.

This is a big book with a big mission: to deliver all the information and tools necessary for great leadership. As a kind of all-in-one leadership workbook, it does so admirably. *Awaken, Align, Accelerate* provides theoretical and practical advice, accompanied by concrete examples, in a package that is both contemporary and comprehensive. This volume can be put to good use immediately by any leader in any business organization.
BARRY SILVERSTEIN (July 19, 2011)

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