

Breathing Oxygen: How Positive Leadership Gives Life to Winning Cultures

Jason V. Barger

Amplify Publishing (Aug 2, 2022)

Hardcover \$19.95 (152pp)

978-1-63755-232-2

Breathing Oxygen is a timely leadership guide about connecting with, and serving, others.

Jason V. Barger's practical leadership guide *Breathing Oxygen* encourages fostering environments of connection, possibility, and energy.

Noting that negativity is toxic within collaborative environments, this book introduces a leadership model that's focused on nurturing others instead. It identifies six values that are crucial to such guidance: grit, ownership, rest, agility, clarity, and inclusivity. When such principles are centered, the book suggests, they cultivate positive, successful working cultures. But doing this work requires reframing the concept of accountability, too, which often takes on negative connotations.

Here, accountability is introduced via positive examples, as of a team member recognizing someone else's helpfulness. In a similar manner, the book reintroduces the 10,000-Hour Rule, or the idea that attaining mastery of a skill requires 10,000 hours of intentional practice; it notes that deliberate rest is an under recognized but important component of this march toward achieving mastery. And in addressing decision-making in fast-paced work cultures, the book maintains traditional support of accurate, logical thinking, while also encouraging forward-thinking leaders to allow their teams space for creativity—an empowering move that will help organizations to adapt to new changes.

Responsive to of-the-moment demands, the book also notes fresh challenges like the rise of social media; it asserts that social media modes of engagement need to be taken into consideration by prospective leaders who are looking to connect with those whom they lead, too. The book also refers to contemporary events to bolster its recommendations, as when it points to the murder of George Floyd, with a related note that leaders need to be proactive about creating welcoming, inclusive work environments.

Anecdotes and observations are used to model and support the book's concepts of constructive leadership. In one tale, hyper successful rock climbers become examples of the importance of commitment and grit. And discussions of Barger and his wife's annual retreat, during which they identify their family goals, pair with praise toward his mother, who modeled supportive leadership, to show how the book's lessons apply beyond just work spaces.

The book's key points are summarized well—both at the end of the book, for easy reference, and in the course of individual chapters. Self-reflection questions are also present to guide leaders in their development, while quotes from notable leaders are used to further emphasize the book's central messages.

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EDITH WAIRIMU (July 6, 2022)

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