Clarion Review

Business & Economics

Building the Team
Kenric T. Brooks
Kenric T. Brooks Sr.
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Two Stars (out of Five)

"My motto as a drill sergeant was 'We shall never fail' and I carried that over as a platoon sergeant" Kenric T. Brooks writes. The leadership skills that brought Brooks the honor of Fort Gordon Drill Sergeant of the Year and lessons learned leading troops in Iraq Kuwait and Kosovo form the basis of his business book.

Brooks' fifteen years in the Army provide anecdotal evidence of how good leadership works. He explains that he didn't always have time to prepare his team before landing in stressful life-threatening situations and he worked with all kinds of people. Failure was not an option; lives were at stake.

Brooks emphasizes trust good communication flexibility clear vision and goals and valuing each individual Although these ingredients for good leadership and teambuilding are not new he wraps the familiar message in new cloth—that of his military experience. By building effective teams businesses will save money by retaining employees. Feeling valued is more important to employees than monetary compensation he says.

The book's strength comes from the author's personal experiences including lessons learned from his superiors and his own mistakes. Brooks explains that during his last deployment to Iraq the team splintered into factions that were not communicating due to a lack of trust. The group got the job done but did not reach its potential as a team he laments.

Leadership also involves praise a quality the public may not associate with a drill sergeant. Brooks' leadership formula involves discipline but also encouraging team members to think creatively and on their feet; leaders need not micromanage.

Brooks' enthusiasm for his topic leads to much repetition of ideas and close editing would have the caught some errors in syntax. His lack of business experience (he's presently

studying business management) makes the application of his ideas to the business world more theoretical than empirical.

He devotes a brief and breezy page to the notorious Bernard Ebbers Jeffrey Skillings and Bernard Madoff. “In these cases their downfall begins with the inability to properly manage cooperate (sic) funds leading to fraud and deception” he writes. Brooks’ comments about these high-profile men are too general to be useful and lack a clear connection to his book’s premise about leadership qualities. This section although timely would have been better omitted.

The author also introduces the “Brooks Productivity and Resource Model” a chart that shows organizations how to improve the flow of information from all levels of an organization from executives to the basic team. More specifics would help translate this chart to practical application.

The book’s chatty style makes it easy reading for people aspiring to leadership positions whether in the military business or organizations. Brooks knows what works in building a team. Management should listen.