

Gear-Up! Shift Development of Your Leaders in High Gear

Mark van Dongen

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This book will be of major significance to senior managers who want to apply sophisticated thinking.

Gear-Up! by Mark van Dongen is a thorough if somewhat academic treatise on leadership development in business. Van Dongen's exhaustively researched book is a valuable addition to leadership literature.

Citing outside sources as well as his own major research project, van Dongen, an international human resources professional, offers an all-inclusive plan for leadership development, divided into four "blocks": Strategy, "Defining and Finding Talent," "Phase-Based Development," and "Organisational Prerequisites."

The four blocks form the basis for a research-based approach to leadership development, which is depicted in two extremely useful flow charts, the "Human Capital Roadmap" and the "HEART model," so named because this second chart roughly approximates the shape of a heart.

Perhaps most interesting about the HEART model is that it acts not only as a primary backbone of the book's conceptual discussion of leadership development, but also as a compliance tool that permits an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of leadership development in the three case studies included in the book.

Gear-Up! is very strong in the manner in which it presents the leadership development process. In addition to providing a historical context for leadership development at the beginning of the book, the author painstakingly describes each of the four blocks in detail.

A particularly novel technique is van Dongen's weaving in of appropriate "audit questions" that relate directly to specific sections of the text. These questions, which are repeated at the end of each block, become a checklist for users to review and assess their own leadership development efforts against the process detailed in the book.

Another excellent aspect of the book is its use of case studies. The three case studies are similar in structure so that the subject companies can be easily compared and contrasted. The companies are fully described and their specific use of the book's leadership development process is explained.

This background is followed by a complete analysis, including suggestions for improvement, scores using the book's audit tool, and a further explanation of the audit results. These case studies are extraordinarily valuable in showing how leading companies apply the leadership development process.

The author legitimately identifies three audiences for the book: HR professionals, C-level managers, and students. This is very clearly a book that targets a specific, relatively narrow audience rather than the general public. It is more appropriate for larger companies with HR functions rather than smaller ones.

Gear-Up! is necessarily highly detailed and process-oriented. While it is written in a somewhat dry, academic style, the content is likely to be of major significance to senior managers who want to apply sophisticated thinking to

developing leaders within their companies.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (April 19, 2017)

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