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GREAT! What Makes Leaders Great: What They Did, How They Did It and What You Can Learn from It

Timothy F. Bednarz
Majorium Business Press
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Five Stars (out of Five)

The pre-publication popularity of the best-selling book *Steve Jobs* by Walter Isaacson is testament to the fact that the reading public is dazzled by great business leaders. While that book delves into the life and leadership of one iconic entrepreneur, *GREAT!* by Timothy Bednarz offers insight into the stories of 160 influential American leaders (not all from business). The book provides both historical context and a fresh perspective by drawing insightful conclusions about characteristics the leaders have in common.

Bednarz begins by identifying key factors of success that are reprized in later chapters. The second chapter establishes the platform for the broad approach of the book by summarizing the large number of operations (automotive, banking, e-commerce, industrial production, and innovation, to name a few) that have been transformed by the leaders spoken of in the text.

In subsequent chapters, the author addresses what these leaders have in common. The categories are quite general—for example, impact, motivation, character—but Bednarz uses them effectively to relate successful people from different types of careers and from different times. In a chapter titled "CAPABILITIES: The Masters of Their Universe," Bednarz quotes Fred Smith of Federal Express, Admiral Hyman Rickover of the US Navy, Herb Kelleher of Southwest Airlines, Estée Lauder of Estée Lauder, and Steve Jobs of Apple, among others. Snippets about such diverse leaders are included under the following subheadings: Persistence, High Degrees of Confidence, Intuition, Curious and Investigative Thinkers, and Masters of Knowledge and Expertise.

At the end of the book, Bednarz summarizes the key findings of the extensive research he conducted on the 160 individuals. He offers fourteen generalizations that provide keen insight into fundamental leadership traits, such as the following: "The great leaders generated enduring organizational values that mirrored their personal attitudes, values, thinking and work ethics." Bednarz provides an appendix that explains the methodology he used in his research. He

also lists other leaders he considered but did not choose for his study.

GREAT! is a fascinating, scrupulously documented work that weaves together the stories of great leaders in a readable format. While a few readers may balk at the rapid-fire delivery that incorporates a sometimes dizzying number of leaders into each chapter, Bednarz does a superb job of structuring the text into meaningful sections. Ultimately, *GREAT!* is a brilliantly conceived and cohesive work—a unique book about leadership that extends far beyond the business genre.

Barry Silverstein