

## Individual Advantages: Be the "I" in Team

**Brian Smith**

**Mary Smith**

Individual Advantages

(225pp)

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*The business book Individual Advantages: Be the "I" in Team contains helpful lessons for cultivating self-awareness.*

Based on the precept that individuals have influence over other people and teams through their thoughts, words, and actions, Mary Smith and Brian Smith's self-help guide *Individual Advantages: Be the "I" in Team* contains constructive advice on how to become a positive, influential person or leader.

The book covers five principles, beginning with an assertion that people increase the value of their influence by recognizing the influence they have on others. The second principle concerns the responsibility that results from having influence, while the third focuses on the intentional and unintentional pitfalls that arise when such influence is not analyzed. Fourth and fifth, the book examines change and self-education in the context of influence.

This book distinguishes itself by concentrating on how individuals influence their teams. Its chapters include extensive, dimensional discussions of how people influence, and are influenced by, the people they encounter and the teams they work in. For leaders, it advocates leading by example and creating stability, engaging and learning about members of the team, listening, recognizing members' achievements, and supporting others. Team members, meanwhile, are advised to be self-aware, responsible, and aligned to their company's mission. Influence, from this perspective, is a two-way interrelation, a notion that is clarified by examples—as of emotional work disputes in which one person affects the reaction of the other person, and vice versa, and of employees adopting the leadership styles that they observe and learn from their seniors.

These notions build from the experiences of the Smiths, who own a business advisory company. The text is dotted with personal anecdotes from which its lessons on micromanagement, valuing team members, and effective communication are drawn. These included admitted mistakes, like delegating the task of hiring a new person, with the assumption that the hiring practices would mirror the Smiths' goals, which were to meet the company's present and future needs.

The Smiths' familiar, clear language also helps when it comes to understanding each topic—including the negative possibility of not addressing individual influences, a blind spot that the book says leads to team members making assumptions, delegating ineffectively, and taking things and people for granted. Additional topics include diversity and inclusion; the latter is addressed with the case of cliques forming between employees with similar backgrounds, leading to issues of group labeling, division, and diversion from the company culture. Such topics help to make the book feel relevant.

The always focused business book *Individual Advantages: Be the "I" in Team* contains helpful lessons for cultivating self-awareness in order to have a positive influence on others.

EDITH WAIRIMU (February 2, 2021)

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