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Leading from the Heart: What Workers Say about Good Leaders

John Heie
iUniverse
Unknown $0.00 (pp)
978-1-4502-0443-9

Protecting a company's financial interests and keeping workers content are not easy tasks. The conversational term is to manage, but real leaders inspire. The publishing industry has been inundated with business titles in recent years. As bookstores accommodate an increasing supply, demanding customers will differentiate between the mediocre and the best among managerial memoirs and procedural guides.

Leading from the Heart is a concise exploration of what makes a company strong from the inside out. The concepts of good management can be vague, even subjective, yet John Heie uses specific examples to illustrate his statements, enabling anyone responsible for leading others to adopt his techniques. These tactics can be used in a variety of situations and professions, making the book universal in its appeal. "If you manage something, then you take care of things, you direct it, and you make sure it's going well and according to plan," Heie writes. "If you lead, you are going somewhere new."

Complex issues addressed in this book include corporate culture and empowerment. Heie provides diagrams and charts to exemplify his organizational principles, as well as bulleted lists that summarize his major points. He believes that employees expect twelve rights or attributes from their employers, such as a say in shaping vision and conversations about values, along with rewards for constructive change and acknowledgment of accomplishments. Workers need independence, not manipulation. When free to make decisions, they perform at a high level. By encouraging and providing resources that facilitate growth, leaders elicit trust and come across as concerned about the welfare of others.

Heie is a strategic planning consultant. He's taught leadership courses at three California universities and in Germany. Heie worked for thirty years at Caltech's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a scientific and engineering company with robotics contracts for NASA. For a decade he was the director of business operations with a staff of 1,300, a corporate role that instilled considerable knowledge. He holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from California State University-LA and a JD in Law from Southwestern University. He's also a member of the California Bar. On retirement from Caltech, Heie received the NASA Outstanding Leadership Medal.

Aside from the author's credentials, it may be his fundamental common sense and superior communication skills that raise this leader above others. The question is not what motivates an individual to succeed, but whether the process of succeeding is enjoyable.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (June 18, 2010)

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