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Vol. 3, No. 1
April 2000
Pp. 85 - 91

BOOK REVIEWS

Managing People, by Bob Adams, et al. Published by Adams Media Corporation, Holbrook, Massachusetts, 1998 (369 pages).

Bob Adams is president of Adams Media Corporation which is a publisher of software and books on business and career. Adams received his MBA from Harvard Business School and is widely acknowledged as an expert in business techniques. In producing the book he works closely with seven other experts in human resources.

Managing People is loaded with insightful techniques in developing high performing employees for outputs beyond imagination. Employees are viewed as the critical asset in the system—an asset dubbed as the soul and heart of any business enterprise. The presentation highlights crucial bottomlines such as those dimensions dealing with handling and firing difficult (“lousy”) employees, coaching, building leadership skills, motivating staff to go beyond bare minimums, resolving conflicts, managing change, and team building. These topics are discussed with down-to-earth tips and scenarios which are simple but deeply penetrating and highly relevant.

Adam’s work is innovative and somewhat unconventional, in the sense that it has opted to do away with a number of topics that are heavily dealt with in most human resource management textbooks, as well as incorporating self-assessment worksheets and copious fit illustrations. An example of the former is the fact that the subjects of rewards, human resource planning, training and development, and organizational exit have not been dealt with in depth. However, some of them are more lightly touched, integrated into some of the other sections of the book—for instance, the subject of rewards which is integrated into the section on motivation. An additional feature is the idea of using nomenclature that is easy to recall such as “necessary conflict” and “resolvable conflict.”

Perhaps, the finest contribution that this book makes is the intricate blend of “people-orientedness” and “performance-orientedness,” coupled with the techniques

April 2000, Vol. 3, No. 1

in handling difficult employees and making work fun. The weak and strong approaches to various common scenarios and self-assessment worksheets will be beneficial to many Asian readers, particularly those with low English language proficiency.

Since it unearths gold mines that tend to overwhelm traditional managers, this work becomes a must in reading for innovative managers, serious human resource managers, management scholars, and nonprofit organizational leaders. However, the back cover advertisement may be a bit of an exaggeration, and should be taken with caution. Consider the following claims: “Everything you need to know is here!” and “Ultimate resource for managers.” Furthermore, managing thinking employees is never an easy road—rather, it is equivalent to an “electric chair.” Hence, the assertion that the book shows how easy the process of managing people is would be contestable. In theory (which has no shortage), YES, but in implementation, a resounding NO.

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Leading Change, Overcoming Chaos by Michael L. Heifetz. Published by Synergy Books International, 1998 (203 pages).

Michael Heifetz, a practicing consultant, wrote this book for managers in business and government, those who have the responsibility for not only introducing change but also making it succeed. Working with a variety of clients, the author found that certain characteristics of successful change methods became clear. These experiences led the author to describe the evolution of changes as progressing through seven distinct stages which he calls the Change Cycle. He claims that this seven-stage Change Cycle can be applied any time change is being planned and implemented. Benefits that can be realized from applying the Change Cycle include: successful planning and implementation of new initiatives, trouble shooting change in process, anticipation of problems and development of solutions, balance and objectivity during the change process, achievement of lasting change, and avoidance of regression. These are strong claims indeed!

The book is divided into two sections. While the first section focuses on the practical understanding and implementation of the Change Cycle, the second section discusses a variety of approaches to managing change such as the pros and cons of forcing change and political barriers to change. One chapter of particular interest and value is chapter 8, where the author introduces intuition as an important tool for solving problems. This comprises a refreshing diversion from the author's step-by-step systematic way of handling change.

The reader will find an excellent summary of the seven-stage Change Cycle on pages 22 through 28. The chart summarizes the desired outcomes to be realized and the typical barriers to be overcome at each stage. Appendix A enables the reader to clearly see and understand the relationship between the stages of the Change Cycle, the energies required at each stage, and the forces in the creative process. It becomes more obvious to the reader that it is, in fact, the energies or forces in the creative process which drive the seven-stage Change Cycle. *Allowance* is the energy force of hope, new thought, without judgment of its practicality, or even its limitations that initiates the first stage of the cycle, viz. "Choosing the Target." The second driving energy is *will*, providing direction and impetus to the second stage, that is "Setting Goals." The third force, *capability*, or the power of the individual, is the essential component of "Initiating Action." *Connection* is the binding force between all objects and results in the next stage of the Change Cycle, "Connectedness," with its physical property of attraction. *Harmony* is necessary to accommodate the change and "Establish the Balance" needed. This is the fifth

April 2000, Vol. 3, No. 1

stage. The sixth energy is labeled “Evolution,” necessary force is *transition*. This energy helps bring all the other forces into a final form or wholeness, thus enabling movement to the next cycle of change.

The author adds *chaos* as an energy force and points that chaos plays a vital role throughout all the stages, as a counterbalance. Chaos, the author suggests, should be viewed as the opposite role to each of the other energies, i.e., in order for any change process to move forward it needs to push against Chaos, thus chaos acts as an opposing force to the dominant energy at each stage. To quote the author, “leadership . . . is the force which drives the change. Chaos is the resisting force which must be overcome or reconciled in order for the change to be completed.” Obviously then, effective change management requires strong, capable leadership.

Having a recipe for effective change management seems idealistic. However, it is a fact that most change efforts do not fare very well. The author’s optimistic enthusiasm regarding the Change Cycle as a reliable approach to change management is supported by the decades that he has spent as an internal and external consultant. He shares a number of his consulting experiences, and these help to win the support of the reader to his cycle approach to change management.

For the change agent, it is useful to have a model that provides checkpoints along the way to help monitor the progress of the change. This is where the Change Cycle can be very helpful. However, every change process is different, and thus flexibility and opportunity are key ingredients to change design and implementation. Change management success ultimately rests on the effectiveness of the leader as a visionary, a catalyst, and a sustaining force, all combined with creativity and intuition. These necessary qualities make it difficult to subscribe fully to the Change Cycle approach proposed by the author. Change management does not necessarily follow a sequence, but rather it is very often a dynamic progression along a path of unexpected events and opportunities.

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The Changing Face of Health Care, by John F. Kilner, Robert D. Orr, & Judith Allen Shelley, editors. Published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998 (314 pages).

The Changing Face of Health Care, a compilation of essays written by different Christian scholars and professionals, aims to provide an appraisal of issues involved in the present trend of health care. Editors are John Kilner of the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, Illinois; Robert Orr, Director of Clinical Ethics at Loma Linda University Medical Center, California; and Judith Allen Shelly, editor of Journal of Christian Nursing, and Resources Director for Nurses Christian Fellowship. A preface by the editors introduces the reader to the purpose of writing the book and its contents. A glossary at the end of the book helps readers understand the vocabulary of the changing approaches to health care in the United States.

Health care is undergoing changes worldwide, but the impact of these changes is being felt to a greater degree in the United States where these changes are taking place rapidly and extensively. Managed care organizations (MCOs), like health maintenance organizations (HMOs), are taking over health care. Seeking to make health care cost-effective, these organizations have brought about changes in patient-caregiver relationships, availability of treatments, and financing obligations of care-receivers. These changes affect both health care professionals and "consumers." The ethical implications and issues brought about by such changes are addressed from a Christian viewpoint in this book.

The first section of the book relates actual experiences of a physician, a nurse, a patient, and an administrator with the emerging health care system. The physician and the nurse face the dilemma of meeting patient needs, while dealing with the constraints of the health care system. The patient shares his struggles with a system so cost-conscious that almost cost him his life. The administrator believes that while changes are inevitable, Christian professionals must not allow them to run their lives, but must suggest better ways to deliver health care with available resources.

In the second section, theological reflections on the role and nature of medicine and nursing, where Christ is pointed out as the ultimate example of

healing and nursing, are presented. One author discussed what justice in health care entails, especially from a Christian caregiver's point of view. Another explained why rationing in health care is a form of denying justice to its receivers.

The third section begins with an essay that contrasts perspectives resulting from changes in health care based on the ethicality of the financial incentives they offer to physicians. The two ends of the continuum of perspectives are the *professional*, which prefers the traditional fee-for-service financing, and the *commercial*, which refers to the profit-oriented insurance companies (e.g., HMOs) that use cost-managing controls with contracted physicians to reduce health care costs. One author says that when operated as a commercial enterprise, "managed care . . . is incompatible with Christian ethics of care" (p. 105). Another concurs that profit-based health care-how managed care is now understood-estranges patients from health care workers. In another essay, the author discusses the concept and implications of *gatekeeping*, HMOs' way of controlling patient access to costly medical interventions by assigning primary care physicians at the entry point. In contrast, a business economics professor gives a completely different view by citing the usefulness of business ethics in delivering health care, and illustrating the advantages of a morally-sensitive business approach to managed care over that of a traditional medical model. The section is closed with an analysis of the Hippocratic oath and a call to integrity and dedication among physicians in the midst of the issues involved in changing health care.

In the fourth section, changes in settings such as mental health, long-term care, and health care delivery to minority communities are presented. This section is concluded with an essay on emerging malpractice issues as a result of managed care.

The last section of the book presents alternatives on how Christians might respond constructively to the challenges of health care changes. Tested ideas on what churches can do to meet health care needs of the poor and church members are introduced. The possibility of organizing physician unions as a safeguard against extreme changes in health care is also explored. Then the role which alternative medicine could play is examined. An essay, "Conclusion: Change Health Care—A British Point of View," provides an idea of what is happening worldwide from a British author's perspective.

While this book may not interest “patients” and “health care givers” in countries where medical care is still traditional, being cognizant regarding changes that are taking place elsewhere and having a proper understanding of what managed care is all about would be advantageous to all. Read this book and be aware of the issues involved in managed care. The book gives a balanced Christian perspective on dealing with the issues involved.

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