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# Book Review

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Carrie A. Picardi, *Leadership Essentials You Always Wanted to Know*. Vibrant Publishers, 2021, 198 pp. ₹1,985. ISBN 978-1-63651-033-0.

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This book is spread over 10 chapters detailing the essentials of leadership for different organisations in terms of developing future leaders. The first chapter is about the meaning and purpose of leadership where the complex subject of leadership is discussed keeping in mind the different elements of leadership such as effectiveness, ethics, efficiency, influence, accountability and so on. The chapter also details the difference in informal and formal leadership and the ways and means that make them these types of leadership successful in their respective domains. It highlights the importance of a leader who leads by example and thus sets the tone for the followers. The author highlights this by giving the specific example of how a college professor is an informal leader inside the classroom for students and outside the classroom has a number of responsibilities as a formal leader, depending on the role allocation. The next chapter elaborates on the multifaceted role of a leader with reference to the different attributes, skills competencies and knowledge s/he ought to have in order to succeed as an impactful leader. Further, the chapter discusses the different takes with respect to the leadership traits; leaders ought to have as elaborated through researches on leadership trait research—universal leadership traits as well as skill-based leadership model. The common traits that emerged from all these perspectives include being a motivator, problem solver, role model, communicator, team builder and a visionary who is assertive, compassionate, patient, creative and insightful in not only dealing with problems but also in dealing with diverse people. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that leadership traits can be developed through the proper development of skills and competencies in those who are to don leadership roles. The third chapter details the importance of leadership behaviours that translate the vision and mission of the organisation into the much-sought outcomes in terms of tangible results. The chapter has examples from best



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practices based on the studies in Ohio State University and the University of Michigan Studies. Behavioural best practices for effective leaders includes understanding the milestones to be achieved in a given time frame with the focus on the vision. It is important to understand the needs and concerns of the followers with respect to the challenges they face in the execution of the plans set out for them by maintaining a two-way communication with respect to listening to their concerns as well as sharing information from time to time. Chapter four of the book details the different leadership styles that have been recommended by different theorists from time to time such that it is understood that, apart from the leadership traits, it is important that the leader understands the needs as per the circumstances presented and adapts his/her leadership behaviour according to the change perceived in the expectations and needs on ground zero. The author builds a case for looking into Fiedler's contingency theory, House's path goal theory, Hershey and Blanchard's situational leadership model and leader-member exchange theory in order to understand the demands exerted on leaders in different situations and the ways and means needed to understand them. The next chapter helps the reader to differentiate between power and influence. The intricate relationship between power and influence with respect to leadership is described along with understanding the key differences between personal power and position power. It also clarifies the four common outcomes of power that are seen in terms of the behaviours of the followers which include, namely, compliance, identification, internalisation and resistance. It is important for every leader to exercise power in such a way that it translates into exerting influence such that the followers are able to understand as well as share the vision of the leader in order to act in a particular way to achieve the desired objectives. This can be done easily if the leader is able to empower the followers by sharing a considerable amount of power and influence such that it increases their commitment as well as engagement in achieving the goals. Chapter six is about different leadership styles that may be adopted by leaders to be successful in their respective domains of responsibility. The two recent leadership styles that support positive outcomes are charismatic leadership and transformational leadership. Although the strength of charismatic leadership is well documented, it is important to understand that charismatic leadership can be disastrous in case of negative or destructive agendas which may be pursued by any such leader in terms of influencing the followers. On the other hand, transformational leadership is a style where the leader is able to transform the organisation or institution not only by his/her leadership behaviours and personal traits but also by giving the followers clear directions, positive motivation, road map of action and incentives for exemplary performance. However, it is important to understand that the strength of charismatic leadership cannot be undermined in comparison to transformational leadership as both have their own strengths and weaknesses. It is also possible that a leader adopts a combination of both charismatic and transformational leadership to lead an organisation successfully. There is no doubt that the success of an organisation is contingent upon the teams that work towards it. Chapter seven of the book details the different types of team leadership such as self-managed or informal team leadership and formal team leadership, that is, a structured team leadership. The author also

focuses on the need for understanding the fine balance between task facilitation and interpersonal relationship building in order to have a high performing team in place such that conflicts are minimised and productivity is maximised. The success of a team is dependent upon the strategic thinking of the team leader with respect to achieving the short-term and long-term goals by taking the team along in terms of demonstrating empathy towards their needs, challenges and interests such that they are able to perceive the leader as a compassionate and caring individual who leads by example. The important aspects that need to be remembered with respect to supporting responsible teams are mutual respect, trust, open communication channels, meaningful engagement, cooperation and dependability as a whole. The next chapter conceptualises the need for leadership development in terms of having a strategy in place to facilitate the development of knowledge, skills and abilities that prepare individuals for leadership roles. It is important that organisations look at the different models that are in place with respect to development of the needed leadership competencies. Competencies are the desirable behaviours that are needed to achieve the outcomes. There are different ways through which leadership competencies may be developed which include enrolling oneself in formal degree programmes, certificate programmes, mentoring and coaching institutes and workshops and classes such that the future leaders are provided with hands on experiences to thus understand the nuances of leadership development. Any organisation that invests in the development of leaders for their future keeping in mind the evolving roles and responsibilities over a period of time shall be able to achieve the organisational outcomes better by planning ahead. Chapter nine focuses on a very important dimension of leadership, that is, ethics. It is indisputable that the critical responsibility of a leader is to not only achieve the organisational outcomes but also do it by simultaneously upholding the moral fabric of integrity and justice high. In order to uphold the principles of ethical leadership, it is important that leaders work towards the best interests of the organisation rather than self-interests. It is important to be confident, secure and competent such that fear of failure or insecurity does not lead to any kind of unethical decision or behaviour which tarnishes not only the image of the leader but also of the organisation in the long run through the abuse of power and influence. It is important that leaders are taught the ethical use of power such that they are mindful of their actions in terms of understanding the relevance of leading by example, demonstrating high integrity, focus, communicating with honesty and transparency and having a value-driven agenda in place to achieve organisational goals positively and ethically. The last chapter of the book elaborates on the importance of three important areas that need to be focused upon in order to lead a thriving organisation which includes managing continuous change, leading through crisis situations and the ability to demonstrate global competency in terms of leadership. The author details the different factors that may contribute to resistance to change which can be overcome by facilitating change through open communication about the benefits of the change, supporting and validating the best interests of all the stakeholders and empowering the teams by communicating the factual information in terms of the necessity of change as well as their role as change agents.

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This book is a must for all practitioners in leadership roles looking at the intricacies with which different dimensions of leadership are explained. The book is coloured and is written in a language that is easily comprehensible and jargon free. The paper used and the print quality, both are excellent. Every chapter gives a brief introduction along with the learning objectives it is supposed to achieve. At the end of each chapter is the point-wise summary of the contents of the chapter. The author has used examples from research in the field of leadership wherever necessary to substantiate a claim with respect to leadership styles or models of leadership development which makes it an evidence-based work. The chapters are not lengthy; this makes the readers focus easily through all the 10 of them. This book is a contribution that shall prove to be valuable for all the stakeholders working in the area of leadership at different levels in times to come.

