

BOOK REVIEWS

The Leadership Compass Top Three

BLINK: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking

Malcolm Gladwell
ISBN 0-316-17232-4
Reviewed by Colin Funk

As our daily lives become more fast-paced and complex, our ability to make effective and appropriate decisions can often be severely compromised. Leaders today suffer from one of the 21st century's newest workplace afflictions: continuous partial attention.

In his latest work, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, Malcolm Gladwell provides hope for those of us living and leading in a rapidly changing world.

At its core *Blink* is about the power of intuition and how it relates to effective decision-making. In particular, Gladwell examines the value of instant decisions – first impressions, gut reactions, and hunches. One of the most compelling concepts presented is the notion of “thin slicing,” or rapid cognition. Thin slicing is the ability to make critical decisions very quickly with either very few facts available, or by throwing away extraneous details. It is to know in an instant, flash or blink, what is truly important – in essence, thinking without thinking.

Gladwell draws upon the unique knowledge and practice of improv actors and jazz musicians to outline structures for cultivating spontaneity, and as a means for better understanding the nature of our intuitive process. His in-depth research and well documented real-life examples shed new light on the value of arts-based learning experiences for enhancing leader development and management training. The so-called “soft” leadership skills like emotional intelligence, paying attention, and intuitive sensibility are no longer nice-to-haves, but critical competencies when leading in complex times.

Gladwell has a real gift for translating complicated technical material into an easy-to-read narrative through rich and vivid storytelling. His messages are clear and compelling, and the implication for leading ourselves and others is profound.

Personal Leadership – Taking Control of Your Work Life What CEOs, entrepreneurs, coaches and a school principal can teach you about leadership

John Baldoni
ISBN: 0-9657345-1-X
Reviewed by Lisa Jackson

John Baldoni's book combines a powerful blend of useable information with engaging essays. Books focusing on the topic of general leadership skills often cover too much information without delving deep enough to provide tangible learning. Those that do go deeper are not easy reads – meaning they aren't likely to get finished. This book, however, engages the reader using simple language, with concrete tools and exercises to reinforce learning after concepts are explored. Baldoni's book is intended for newer managers who want to become true leaders, but since all the essential basics of what being a leader truly means, and how to be a better one, are outlined so clearly, this is a tool that should be shared by all members of your team.

The first half covers critical topics such as “Defining Leadership Character” and “Demonstrating Leadership Emotion.” There are personal assessments and action planners at the end of each chapter. If you opened this book without knowing anything about leadership at all, you could vastly increase your understanding by reading just the first half alone.

The second half of the book is comprised of nine essays about leaders from all walks of life, at all stages of their careers, from all types of cultural environments. You'll feel a true connection with at least two or three. These stories can be read on their own, or in conjunction with the first half of the book for added inspiration or clarity. It's a nice touch that adds to the shelf life of the book.

Imagin.i.zation

Gareth Morgan

ISBN 0-7619-11269-X

Reviewed by Kimberley Holmes

Gareth Morgan combines the ideologies of imagination and organization to come up with the combined concept of Imagin.i.zation, a competence he believes is key for managing in a world of flux and change. The text, written in plain wording with creative illustrations, explains this management technique by exploring how adults learn via our frameworks and personal metaphors. "The challenge facing modern managers is to become accomplished in the art of using metaphor to find new ways of seeing, understanding and shaping their actions." Morgan provides concrete, applicable metaphors such as strategic termites, spider plants, political football, and "boiling dry." Each metaphorical concept is explained in depth and could be easily used as a tool in the workplace.

Overall, a solid technique of management is explored which addresses the complexity of the adult learner, presented in an easy to understand manner. It's an informative and enjoyable read for leaders looking to increase creative thinking and imaginative insight in the workplace. This text could also provide inspiration for facilitators looking to incorporate metaphor as a means to increase creativity, and challenge thinking within an existing framework to pave the way for organizational change and development.

