

Leadership and Management in the 21st century; Business Challenges of the Future
Edited by Carly L. Cooper Oxford University Press 2005

This 354 page, three section – the challenges of the business environment, the academics view and the practitioners view - book brings together the thoughts of leading western figures from industry, academia, professional bodies and the media. The contributors examine what trends mark the global economy, how they will affect business in the 21st century and what will be required in terms of leadership and management to manage effectively. Its editor, professor of organisational psychology at Lancaster University in the UK, Gary Cooper, concludes “we seem to be moving towards a new leadership model with the bells and whistles of technology”. He quotes a reference from 1991 in suggesting a comparison between “old leadership; non-charismatic” and “new leadership; charismatic”, the reference states that less emphasis should be placed on planning and routine and more on vision and change.

As an owner manager of one of the 99% of all firms that employ less than 50 people, I found the practitioners views to be of most active relevance; yes the psychological analysis of “respectable buccaneers and managerial quisling” is interesting. And the ‘challenges of the business environment’ section provides food for thought: Bill Starbuck considers such conflicts as the affluent versus the poor, companies versus nations, the short run versus the long run - he considers the role of the manager is to ‘strongly influence’. Other commentators talk about shared leadership, the importance of social capital and “that technology itself will create the next generation of business leaders”!

Section three discusses the business manager’s practical dilemmas and how managers and leaders are to be cultivated in the future. Generally the challenges are ‘how to achieve performance through people’ and the issue; managing human capital (part-timers, the self employed, the semi retired and people from diverse cultures) is the one all organisations face. We are told that “managers, whether in the public or private sector, need to be creative and innovative and not administrative. They need the energy to drive people enthusiastically”. Apparently in the past, management education was more about “the technical skills and the specifics of their function, rather than in the interpersonal, human, social, cultural political and ethical issues and skills that are in today’s world the fundamental armoury of leaders”

So is Cooper right to conclude with “we seem to be moving towards a new (charismatic) leadership model”? H Tosi et al, *Leadership Quarterly*, volume15, issue 3 June 2004; thinks not: ‘whereby the correlation of charisma with CEO remuneration is almost total; the correlation with organisational success is zero’. But, research from Alimo-Metcalf, University of Leeds, 2002; concludes that a leader builds shared vision, acts with integrity, shows genuine concern and inspires others. Can this be done without charisma? I think charisma is a useful, but not essential,

leadership personality trait, and the 'great man theory' was perhaps one of those must-have fads of the 1990's. The role of the 21st century leader is to create and to communicate the vision, and the role of the manager is to communicate its direction.

Cooper concludes that we make our own circumstances; to make these the ones we want, transformational, charismatic, visionary leaders must place more emphasis on vision, change, commitment, extra effort and proaction. Commitment and not compliance is on Cooper's list; but missing, in my opinion, are two essential leadership challenges of twenty-first century leaders that of how to build trust and thereby influence and, number one; the ability to communicate (or is this taken as read?).

This book, particularly its comprehensive 17-page introduction, provides an excellent overview of leadership and management issues. A mine of interesting views and opinions about the business challenges of the future are scattered throughout the book however, to a certain extent, these have to be hunted down. My recommendation is to start with section three; the practitioner's views.

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