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Leadership Is An Art



Synopsis

First published in 1989, Max DePree's timeless words now bring his practical philosophy to a new generation of readers. More than ever, he provides necessary insights and guidelines to leaders in every field.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

On page one of *Leadership Is an Art* Max Depree writes, "The book is about the art of leadership: liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible". This is a theme that runs throughout this very wise and in every way excellent work. The following quotes provide some of the flavor of Depree's enlightened and inspiring thinking:*

- The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor.*
- In addition to all of the ratios and goals and parameters and bottom lines, it is fundamental that leaders endorse a concept of persons. This begins with an understanding of the diversity of people's gifts and talents and skills.*
- Understanding and accepting diversity enables us to see that each of us is needed. It also enables us to begin to think about being abandoned to the strengths of others, of admitting that we cannot know or do everything.*
- Leaders don't inflict pain; they bear pain.*
- First, as a Christian I believe that each person is made in the image of God. For those of us who have received the gift of leadership from the people we lead, this belief has enormous implications.*
- Leaders owe people space, space in the sense of freedom. Freedom in the sense of enabling our gifts to be exercised.*
- Participative management is not democratic. Having a say differs from having a vote.*

Interestingly, though in

organizations like ours we need a lot of freedom, there is no room for license. Discipline is what it takes to do the job.* One of the important things leaders need to learn is to recognize the signals of impending deterioration.

While relatively small in size, this book speaks volumes on how the spirit of leadership should be. Yes, it is idealistic and the anecdotes are entertaining, but I believe it also proves useful to leaders striving to understand how to lead people in a way that benefits everyone. This book aspires to articulate that leaders must transform themselves, not the people around them. He challenges leaders to look beyond what they need, and instead focus on what they owe. DePree has a self-described Participative Management perspective and it is the continuous thread throughout the book. He focuses on how to create a collective culture within the organization which is ideally made up of employee-owners who are the epitome of his affirmation of identity within an organization - not to mention a competitive edge in the marketplace. These lofty aspirations can be actualized in the organizational world by incorporating the idea of "roving leadership" and use of organizational "giants" which are people within organizations who need to be sought out and let run free . . . through the act of roving leadership. In an attempt to define leadership, DePree lays the foundation upon which he feels successful leadership should be judged. His criteria for a leader are not based on a set of interchangeable personality characteristics, but instead a compilation of what a success leader does to fulfill his responsibilities and debts to both the organization and to the people he works for. DePree gives us three specific sentences which I think are not only insightful, but sums up the book's whole philosophy, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor.

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