

Leadership: Essentials

Tom Peters (Dorling Kindersley, 2005)

If a good idea is worth £5, then £7.99 is a bargain for this pocket-sized collection of leadership insights from business guru Tom Peters. You'll find it in the business section of railway station or high street bookshops.

I would not normally comment on the design of a book first, but in this case it's integral to the content: colour, photos, capitals for emphasis and lists abound. To give one example, one page in the chapter on women has just 9 words. In large white capitals on a black background: 'Fire all male salespeople'. Underneath, in small capitals: 'I'm only kidding. Sort of'.

I picked up the book because of chapter 3: '**Meet the new boss: women rule!**' The chapter starts with a list of contrasts: 'Was' and 'Is'. These roughly correspond to (stereotype) traditional male leadership and new female leadership. There's some thought-provoking material here. Peters has done his homework, reading some of the women who's written on leadership in the last twenty years, and writes provocatively.

A sample page: 'Vision

I imagine...

A woman in the White House.

A new epoch in which we all (men as well as women) honor, reward, and take advantage of women's extraordinary strengths.

An enterprise doctrine that views women as much of the answer not only to the 'talent problem', but also to the 'leadership problem'

A world in which this damn chapter is ...totally obvious.'

Some words which seemed rather pointed – but a man can write them: 'Guys like rules. They like commanding and controlling. They like 'knowing their place'. They like hierarchical structures and the certainties associated therewith...'

The book is not just about women, though, and 'The leadership 50' contains more food for thought. For example: 'Leaders say 'I don't know'. 'Leaders are rarely the best performers'. 'Leaders are talent developers.' 'Leaders thrive on paradox.' 'Leaders love the mess.'

Forget that it's all about how to run a big company. It may be even more important to turn your church or your ministry into a 'dynamic centre of excellence, where Amazing Stuff is always being initiated.'

I guess it's my kind of book. If you like the excerpts above, get it and read it!

Rosie Ward
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