



Alpha Leadership: Tools for Business Leaders Who Want More from Life

Anne Deering, Robert Dilts, Julian Russell

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This is a book for 21st Century leaders. The authors are offering approaches to reduce stress and to promote satisfaction at a time when this seems impossible for most people struggling to make sense of the workplace and its demands:

76% of managers want to spend more time with their families

50% say they feel too mentally and physically exhausted to do anything but work or sleep

30% say their lives are out of control

one in five say they are too stressed to enjoy their lives at all

Many of the leadership skills (such as emotional intelligence, weak signal management, mental agility) that are key to success in today's corporate world are not taught in business schools, are rarely discussed by business academics, nor are they recognised within corporations as they recruit, promote and train their staff. Business conversation is all about the war for talent - and yet the solutions presented are all "outside-in" (i.e. what the corporation needs to do to ensure people stay, to "make" their values align, to retain them) rather than "inside-out" (i.e. alignment of individual's sense of purpose with how they spend their time, the fit of their skills to the demands of their job, and so on).

Alpha Leadership seeks to redress these imbalances.

The book is constructed around a new and simple model of leadership. The authors call this, 'Alpha leadership', which consists of three main axes: Anticipate, Align and Act. They have derived this model from their extensive experience of leadership development in the US and Europe, during a period of rapid adaptation to the digital economy. The authors argument is that traditional approaches to leadership, leadership as it is taught in the business schools and the criteria assigned to it by corporate promotion and appraisal systems, focus exclusively on 'action', and take little or no account of the crucial importance of anticipation and alignment. This is of increased concern since the skills most likely to generate success for leaders in today's networked, knowledge-based and unpredictable business environment are precisely those most often ignored.

This emphasis on action without its preliminaries of anticipation and alignment is also a paradox, since without effective anticipation and alignment, action is likely to be inefficient, ineffective, and unsustainable. The book is aimed at an "inside-out" view of leadership: starting with the individual and his/her sense of purpose and values, rather than the more typical approach to leadership writing which adopts an "outside-in" view, holding up models and examples of other leaders to emulate with little or no clue of how to go about doing so, or indeed whether or not this would be an appropriate model in the reader's specific context.

Alpha Leadership is designed as a pragmatic "how to" book, derived from the authors experience of one-to-one executive coaching - with tools, approaches and frameworks to support leaders in progressing in their careers, while also maintaining a sense of balance and purpose in their lives. Each chapter starts with a "parable" or story - a very readable analogy from completely different fields of study that is used to shed

light on the issues and problems facing leaders in the business environment. The authors then move to a section on "sense making" (avoiding blue sky theorising in favour of practical, down-to-earth interpretation and real life business examples). Finally the authors include relevant tools/frameworks to help the readers apply what they have read in their every day business lives.

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Tara Cassell:

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