Leaders Talk Leadership: Top Executives Speak Their Minds

Meredith D. Ashby, Stephen A. Miles
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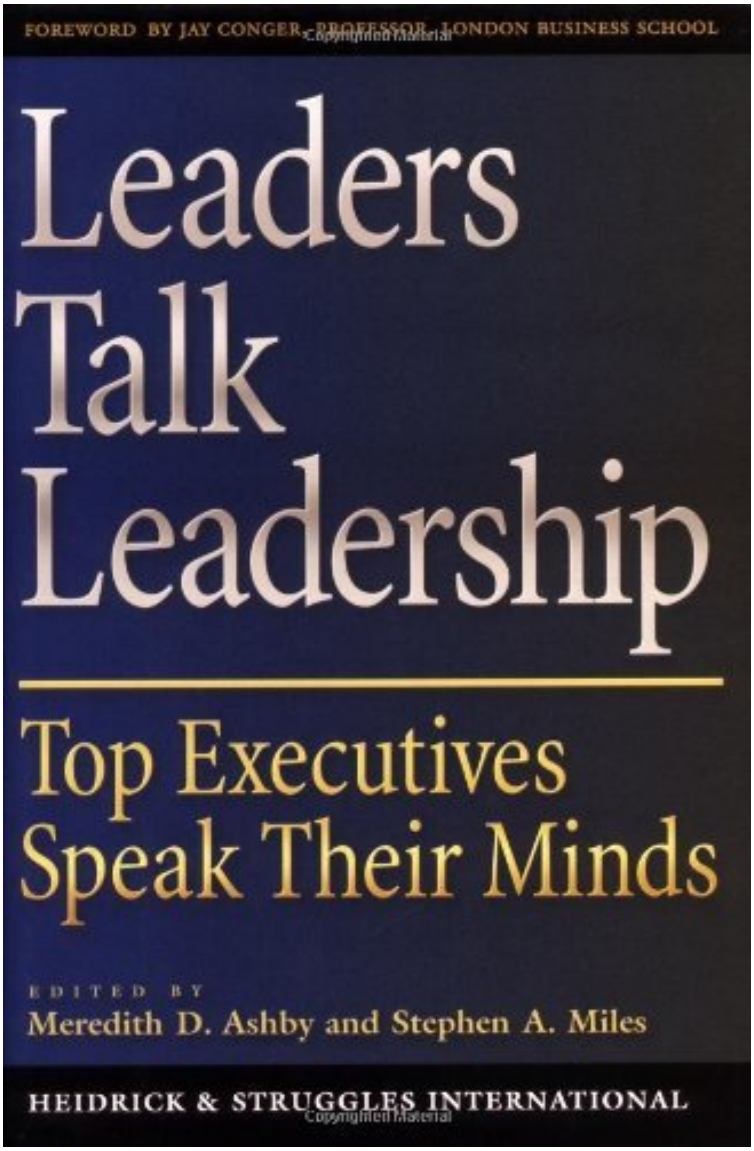

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Meredith D. Ashby, Stephen A. Miles : Leaders Talk Leadership: Top Executives Speak Their Minds before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Leaders Talk Leadership: Top Executives Speak Their Minds:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The New Leader: Catalyst of Distributed LeadershipBy Robert MorrisThere is really nothing new in this book and yet the interview material it provides is first-rate and brilliantly presented by Ashby and Miles. After the Foreword ("Leading in the New Century: Storm Clouds and Silver Linings on the Horizon") and Introduction ("Factors Affecting Leadership and Human Capital Management"), they organize

49 interviews within five chapters, followed by an Epilogue ("Optimizing Human Capital with a 'People Operating System' Approach"). Actually, during their research for this book, they conducted hundreds of interviews with all manner of executives, selecting responses which, to varying degrees, helped to answer questions such as these:* What gives companies competitive advantage?* What are the burning issues for corporate leaders today?* How do leaders lead in times of crisis or instability?* How do companies identify, attract, develop, and retain the best and brightest people in the marketplace?The title of each chapter correctly indicates the primary focus of the interviews assembled within it: Leadership, Managing Human Capital, Establishing Competitive Advantage, Strategic change and Transformation, and finally Chapter 5, The Stakeholder's View. The value of this book will no doubt be determined by each reader in terms of the nature and extent of material most relevant to the reader's specific needs and interests. Here are brief excerpts from a few of the conversations which were of greatest interest to me. Hopefully they give those who read this review a sense of the quality of the responses to important issues.Jim Collins on leadership: "We [Collins and his research associates] concluded that the answer to making companies great was not leadership itself. The real distinction was that there is a special form of leadership that takes companies from good to great....Level Five leaders are ambitious first and foremost for the company and its long-term greatness, not for themselves as individuals. As a result, they tend to be personally modest, humble and reserved,, but enormously willful on behalf of the organization....They tend not to become celebrities. They don't have their egos wrapped up in making themselves well-known....We found that there is an inverse relationship between high-profile, charismatic, egocentric leadership -- the Level Four leaders -- and the journey of the company from good to great."John Hagel on how to respond to increased performance demands, shifts of surplus from from a structural advantage to a human capital advantage, and a bottleneck to value creation caused by shortages in key skill sets/experience: "What can companies do about these trends? As talent increases its ability to capture value, companies will need to rethink their businesses on a profound level. This includes even the most basic question of all: What business are we in? What business are we really in? Perhaps the most significant challenge involves the need to adopt a different mindset. Rather than looking at cost-cutting and automation as ways to cope, businesses will need to focus on accelerating growth as a way to reward talent and increase returns to the business at the same time. Rather than focusing on attracting and retaining talent, companies will need to concentrate on developing privileged relationships with talent, wherever it may reside."Michael Dell on the New Economy: "The most essential trend, indeed the trend that spawned the New Economy, is the transition from atoms to electrons and now photons as a medium for information. With each of these transitions, the vehicles upon which information rides have become lighter. Thoughts, ideas, and productivity now flow with less friction than ever before, decreasing transaction costs and removing barriers to communication. As a result, it's now as simple and inexpensive to communicate a world away as it is to send a message across the room."David M. Rubenstein on Jack Welch's leadership: "When he took the helm of General Electric 20 years ago, it was a well-respected company. At the time, no one thought that GE had any significant problems, yet Welch, in a mere two decades, transformed it into a completely different organization by building on existent strengths. Now, ha he just [in italics] presided during his period and not [in italics] led, GE would still be a reasonably successful electrical appliance company. But by dramatically expanding its mission and turning it toward a path it would never otherwise have taken, he set the gold standard for business leadership. Welch will be remembered for asking questions that others hadn't asked, motivating people, asking employees to dig a little deeper and work a little harder, and giving them a sense of why that was important to them, to their families, and to their communities."In the Epilogue, written in collaboration with Jay A. Conger, Miles and Ashby present what they describe as a "new method of managing talent -- a systemic, holistic approach that leverages upside potential in the day-to-day workplace by translating it into sustainable value." It is called a People Operating System (POS) and is, in effect, a human capital management team. They suggest that there are seven specific attributes to be considered when identifying leadership talent. The seven are sensible enough and the points of emphasis, insofar as the attributes are concerned, are appropriate if rather obvious. However, I was unprepared for the introduction of the POS in the Epilogue. There is no indication that the POS was significantly influenced by what was learned during the interviews, from what Miles and Ashby call "leadership vignettes." I question the appropriateness of the Epilogue. Frankly, I had expected and would have preferred some correlations between and among the responses from those interviewed which suggest how the five chapter subjects may be separate but are also interdependent.Whereas the Foreword and Introduction are eminently appropriate to the material in this volume, the Epilogue is not...at least not as Conger, Miles, and Ashby present it. Perhaps they will write another book which focuses entirely on the design, implementation, and subsequent development of a POS.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. user-friendly guideBy Carol DeChantTop CEOs give their views on all that matters in business.Strong on visionary leadership of talent, these top execs all view employees as their most valuable assets. You'll find innovative thinking on finding, hiring, developing, challenging, retaining and continuing to motive workers in demanding, volatile environments. User-friendly format with helpful Contents and Index tables allow you to dip into this book just to glean your favorite moguls' musings. But most readers will probably devour it in one sitting, start to finish. It's that captivating.

Leaders Talk Leadership is an impressive collection of interviews with some of the world's most respected corporate leaders and management scholars. Edited by Ashby and Miles of the preeminent executive search firm Heidrick and Struggles, this compilation of thought leadership spanning industries and geographies addresses the key issues facing executives today such as governance, leadership and strategy, how to lead in volatile times or through a corporate transformation, how to best leverage human capital and how to achieve competitive advantage in today's environment. Some of the CEO's featured in the book include Ken Chenault, of American Express, Steve Reinemund of PepsiCo, Heinrich von Pierer of Siemens, Ken Lewis of Bank of America, Edward Tian of China Netcom, Fred Smith of FedEx, Hank McKinnell of Pfizer, A.G. Lafley of Proctor and Gamble, Klaus Zumwinkel of Deutsche Post World Net, William Haseltine of Human Genome Sciences, Linda Sanford of IBM, Larry Weinbach of Unisys and Michael Dell of Dell Computer. Framing these cutting-edge concepts are interviews and written essays by preeminent academics, including Jay Conger from London Business School, Jim Collins of Good to Great, Mohanbir Sawhney of Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and Jeffrey Pfeffer of Stanford University. Serving as the line executive's roadmap to recruiting, retaining and developing talent and an encyclopedia of MBA students worldwide, this book represents path-breaking leadership perspectives from path-breaking leaders.

"An impressive collection of insights in leadership" --Jay Fishman, CEO of St Paul CosWhether you are leading a transformation of your business, identifying your next generation of leaders or working to energixe yout organization's culture, this book provides valuable observations and advice from leaderhip's top echelon," --Jonathan Ward, Chairmane and Chief Executive Officer of The ServiceMaster Company"From the human capital experts, Heidrick and Struggles comes this magnum opus of impactful advice-theoretical and practical-for the next generation of business.""This book, with an array of leadership vignettes from some of the world's CEOs, academics, and management experts is a convenient 'pick up and read anytime' format for anyone wanting to know what's on the minds of those at the helm of remarkable companies.""Leaders Talk Leadership ... is a landmark result of our effort to add continuously to our knowledge base. In this unique and unprecedented compendium of leadership perspectives, more than fifty of the business world's renowned and accomplished leaders spell out, in their own words and from their own experience, the philosophies and strategies they have used to transform their companies and keep their edge in an ever-shifting marketplace."--Piers Marmion, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Heidrick and Struggles International, Inc.From the Inside FlapHow do leaders lead in times of crisis or instability? What gives companies competitive advantage? How do companies identify, attract, develop, and retain the best and brightest? These are some of the questions that Heidrick Strugglesrsquo; Business Analysts Meredith D. Ashby and Stephen A. Miles sought to answer as they conducted interviews with hundreds of CEOs, senior managers, corporate leaders, financiers, academics, and management and leadership experts. A whorsquo;s who of the global economy, Leaders Talk Leadership is the result of their unprecedented efforts. This compendium of leadership perspectives, the first-ever to be in first-person, profiles the strategies of the men and women who have proven their credentials as leaders time and again. In these pages, such business luminaries as A.G. Lafley of Procter Gamble, Steven Kerr of Goldman Sachs, Michael Dell of Dell Computer, Ken Chenault of American Express, Steve Reinemund of PepsiCo, Ken Lewis of Bank of America, Fred Smith of FedEx, Hank McKinnell of Pfizer, David S. Pottruck of Charles Schwab, and Heinrich von Pierer of Siemens discuss how companies can best transform themselves and keep their edge in an ever-shifting marketplace. As these corporate leaders make clear, the worldrsquo;s most respected, value-driven companies derive an ever-increasing part of their valuations from the collective power of their intangible assets: brands, partners, intellectual property, and people. An overarching theme that emerges again and again is that the greatest single asset of any organization is its human capital, the people with a vested interest in the business, to whom the business must in turn show a similar commitment in order to remain competitive. In boom times or busts, in calm or calamity, creative leadership is the foundation of all great companies. Tapping into the collective wisdom of an unparalleled group of highly accomplished leaders, and distilling this wisdom into succinct essays, Leaders Talk Leadership should be required reading for managers at every level.About the AuthorMeredith D. Ashby and Stephen A. Miles are business analysts at the preeminent executive search firm Heidrick Struggles. Together they work with the firmrsquo;s Board Services group to identify, create, and deliver cutting-edge thought leadership on topics such as governance and human capital to clients worldwide. They have had various articles in BusinessWeek magazine on leadership and created a centerpiece journal on human capital issues for the World Economic Forumrsquo;s 31st annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. In addition, Ashby is a business development specialist supporting the Board Services group, and Miles is involved in the firmrsquo;s Executive Assessment practice. Heidrick Strugglesrsquo; Board Services serves as the focal point for its Board Director, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, and President assignments worldwide. The charter of the global consultancyrsquo;s Board Services group is to provide the most qualified resources possible to affect outstanding results for search execution at the board of directors and chief executive level. Vice Chairman John T. Gardner leads the Board Services group, which includes 12 Senior and Vice Chairman worldwide. To contact the Editors, please email CEO@Heidrick.com or call 800-444-6192.