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When Professionals Have to Lead: A New Model for High Performance

Thomas J. DeLong, John J. Gabarro, Robert J. Lees
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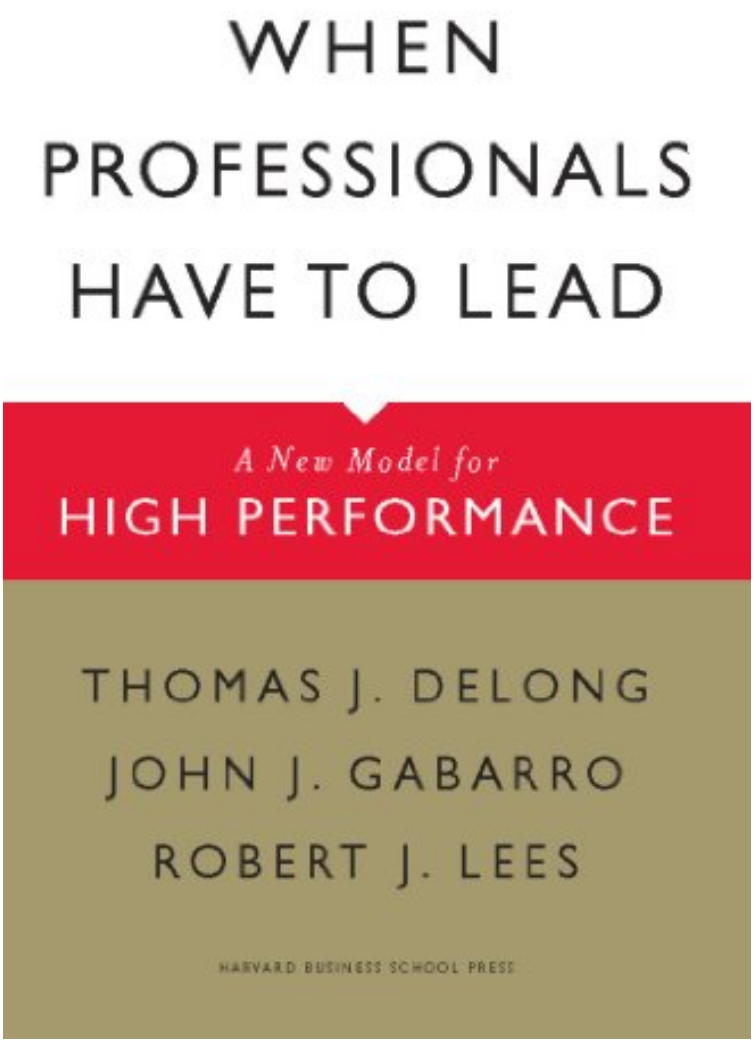

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Thomas J. DeLong, John J. Gabarro, Robert J. Lees : When Professionals Have to Lead: A New Model for High Performance before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised When Professionals Have to Lead: A New Model for High Performance:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great guidance for managing PSFs in the 21st centuryBy Scott W.This is a fantastic read on professional service firms (PSFs). I've read most of David Maister's content on the subject which is primarily from the 90s. This volume gives a much needed update to the management thinking behind

PSFs. I am a practicing professional engineer in the consulting realm and I highly recommend this book. I'm not quite done reading it but here are a few of the highlights for me:Most of the information here is qualitative in nature (few statistics and graphs) but it's obvious that the authors are speaking from experience in researching a numbers of PSFs. The authors have been very active in researching management science behind PSFs and training through the Harvard executive education series on PSFs and their experience shows through. One thing I like is that the book is concise yet packed full of good tidbits. I can't stand it when authors draw out the same point over hundreds of pages just to make a long book. This book it pithy and straight-forward. I like to read a chapter then put it down and reflect on the content.The book makes some great points about managing a PSF in the 21st century. They speak about relentless competition and price transparency with clients as well as the trend toward commoditization of services. Just like other industries, it is very difficult to create and maintain competitive advantage in today's marketplace. The book gives plenty of tips on how to protect against this phenomenon.The book takes a couple of chapters just to describe characteristics of PSF employees. Employee skills and professional development are important for all companies but they are especially important for PSFs because they are selling the expertise of their professionals. There are lots of implications in here about employee retention which are great. I've seen firms crumble from the inside out if they can't challenge and retain their professionals.All in all, highly recommended.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Key leadership activities for a professional services firmBy John GibbsAlthough the nature of professional services is changing, with firms experiencing greater internal demands from professionals and greater external demands from clients, the majority of leaders are using old frameworks and ways of thinking to fashion makeshift behaviours to meet the new challenges, according to Thomas DeLong, John Gabarro and Robert Lees in this book. The book provides a new framework for leading and managing professional services firms, called the integrated leadership model.The new model proposed by the authors consists of four interrelated sets of leadership activities:* Setting direction, which involves articulating the firm's objectives and how the work of professionals relates to those objectives* Gaining commitment to the direction, which is necessary to make professionals feel involved and included* Execution, which involves follow-through and accountability to ensure that financial goals are met and people do what they promise to do* Setting a personal example, which requires the leader to embody the firm's stated values and goalsWhile I thoroughly agree with the importance of these four sets of activities, I am left wondering whether there is anything particularly new about them. I would have thought that these have always been important activities for successful leadership of a professional services firm.The book contains chapters on why professional service firms require a different style of management from that required by product-producing businesses, using segmentation to respond to commoditisation pressures, the importance of strategic differentiation, how to motivate and develop high achievers, and the important role played by professionals who are "solid performers" rather than stars.The book's title refers to the fact that professionals are often not well equipped for leadership in a firm. It is often quite confronting for a newly-promoted professional to be faced with the demands and opposition of erstwhile friendly colleagues. I expected the book to deal more extensively with this problem, including in particular how to identify the best candidates for leadership positions and how professionals can work towards acquiring a suitable range of leadership skills.Notwithstanding these minor issues, in my opinion the book makes a valuable contribution to the field of professional services firm management, and is useful reading for anyone in or aspiring to a professional services firm leadership role.12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Dimensions of High-Impact LeadershipBy Robert MorrisIn this volume, Thomas DeLong, John Gabarro, and Robert Lees present what they characterize as "an integrated leadership model" that is designed to "stimulate thinking and facilitate changes that high-performing firm leaders want to enact." Although their focus is on the professional service firm (PSF), all of the information and counsel in this book can also be of substantial value to other kinds of organizations. In fact, decision-makers in those (e.g. manufacturers) must also offer professional service of the highest quality, especially now when competing in what has become, as Thomas Friedman describes it, a "flat world."First, DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees introduce their integrated leadership model and explain its background, "how it evolved out of the problems and opportunities that have bedeviled heads of firms in recent years." I agree with them that, for most PSFs, a fresh leadership approach is "mandatory." In fact, research and DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees in combination with their own experiences have revealed exemplary firms and what can be learned from them. That information helped to guide and inform the development of the integrated leadership model.In the remaining eight chapters, DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees respond to questions such as these:What are the dominant characteristics of the integrated leader?To what extent are PSFs "a breed apart"?What unique challenges and opportunities do they offer to their leaders?What should a firm offer: products, services, or both?How to define and then measure a PSF's market?How to achieve and then sustain strategic differentiation?How to attract, motivate, and then retain the talent needed?Note: DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees identify and then discuss ten "motivational drivers" in Chapter 7, pages 150-155, and then suggest five reasons why high-achieving professionals stay motivated. In my opinion, this is some of the most valuable material in the book.Why is the "essential B player" the "heart and soul" of an organization?How to connect professionals to a PSF and then the firm to the future?How to communicate expectations and provide the resources for meeting them?I especially appreciate the provision of various checklists and "Figures" which consolidate key points throughout the narrative.

Here is a selection of brief excerpts that suggest the thrust and flavor of the co-authors' insights and writing style."The integrated leadership model is incomplete if any one of the four core behaviors is left out. The model is powerful only if leaders set direction, get commitment to the direction, execute, and by their actions set personal examples as leaders." (Page 42)"The challenge that each firm faces is how to answer the following four strategic questions about each of its practices, and then to remain true to the answers: What is the economic equation that will drive this practice? What will differentiate the practice from our competitors? What can we do better than anyone else? What are we absolutely passionate about?" (Page 97)Financial performance can improve significantly "when a firm or practice aligns all of its internal structures, processes, and activities - its `organization' as whole - with its strategy. Organizational alignment has its roots in the work of Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch...who found that high-performing companies in different industries developed organizations and procedures that were uniquely adapted to the particular demands posed by the industry segments." (Page 141)"For many partners and other senior professionals, on-the-spot corrective feedback, coaching, and mentoring are not seen [by the high-need-for- achievement personality] as central to the task trajectory of getting a project, deal, or matter done, so these aspects of leadership are ignored. We call this self-feeding dynamic the `PSF Paradox' [in that] because they too are high-achievement personalities, senior professionals are not disposed to give junior professionals what they need to stay motivated or develop - even though they too had the same needs early in their career." (Pages 163-164)With regard to the last excerpt provided, I am reminded of what recent research conducted by the Gallup Organization revealed: only 25% of employees are engaged in their jobs, 55% of them are just going through the motions, and 20% of them are working against their employers' interests. How could it be otherwise when senior professionals are unwilling and/or unable to provide corrective feedback, coaching, and mentoring to junior professionals in the same firm?To their great credit, after carefully identifying the "what" of effective leadership in personal service firms, DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees focus most of their attention on how to achieve and then sustain high-impact performance, especially now when leaders in PSFs face unprecedented challenges in a global marketplace and are engaged in a constant battle against disconnection. Integrated leaders are "connectors" who "create a safety net to catch those professionals who may be ready to leave the system or who are not [sufficiently] engaged in the enterprise. The dilemma for most PSFs is that they do not explicitly value or reward those professionals who spend the time and effort focused on the human side of the enterprise. Great PSFs need to confront this deficiency. The time has come to value the professionals who keep the culture dynamic and supportive through their ability to connect people throughout the firm."Amen.Those who share my high regard for this brilliant book are urged to check out David Maister's Managing the Professional Service Firm and his more recent Practice What You Preach, Dave Ulrich and Norm Smallwood's Brand Leadership, Justin Menkes's Executive Intelligence, Judgment co-authored by Noel Tichy and Warren Bennis, Ram Charan's Know-How and his more recent Leaders at All Levels, Roger Martin's The Opposable Mind, The New American Workplace co-authored by James O'Toole and Edward Lawler, Henry Chesbrough's Open Business Models, Frans Johansson's The Medici Effect, James Kilts's Doing What Matters, Dean Spitzer's Transforming Performance Measurement, and Enterprise Architecture As Strategy co-authored by Jeanne W. Ross, Peter Weill, and David Robertson.

For too long, professional services firms have relied on the producer-managerrdquo; model, which works well in uncomplicated business environments. However, todayrsquo;s managing directors must balance often conflicting roles, more demanding clients, tougher competitors, and associates with higher expectations of partners at all levels.When Professionals Have to Lead presents an overarching framework better suited to such complexity. It identifies the four critical activities for effective PSF leadership: setting strategic direction, securing commitment to this direction, facilitating execution, and setting a personal example. Through examples from consulting practices, accounting firms, investment banks, and other professional service organizations, industry veterans DeLong, Gabarro, and Lees show how this model works to: Align your firmrsquo;s culture and key organizational components. Satisfy your clientsrsquo; needs without sacrificing essential managerial responsibilities. Address matters of size, scale, and complexity while maintaining the qualities that make professional services firms unique.A valuable new resource, this book redefines the role of leadership in professional services firms.

About the AuthorThomas J. DeLong is the Philip J. Stomberg Professor of Management Practice in the Organizational Behavior area at the Harvard Business School. John J. Gabarro is Baker Foundation Professor at the Harvard Business School. Robert J. Lees is former director of professional development at Morgan Stanley and former director of human resources for Ernst Young International.