

Bridging the Information Gap

Measures of Leadership, edited by Kenneth E. Clark and Miriam B. Clark.

Within the past 20 years, American businesses have become acutely aware of the need to increase productivity and efficiency throughout the workforce. In fact, U.S. companies reportedly spend \$20 billion annually on training programs that present ways to boost productivity and improve efficiency levels.

But how can your organization find and develop the leadership that is necessary for instilling the motivation to implement those strategies?

Defining, testing, and measuring leadership qualities is one of the most pursued areas of applied psychology today. However, most of the well-publicized leadership research has pertained to only first- and second-level management situations. Work relating to business executives, the military, and governmental or community organizations has been either inaccessible or nonexistent.

Measures of Leadership attempts to bridge the informational gaps by presenting a compilation of the most significant leadership research to date. Because the book is so in-depth and complete in scope, it may qualify as the source you need to help you incorporate leadership training into your employee development programs.

The end product of an invitational conference held in San Antonio in 1988, the three-part book presents the collaborative research efforts of more than 40 of the field's most renowned scientists.

Part I contains nine chapters of introductory material written by the editors. It offers a thorough look at the past and present scopes of leadership research. Subject matter of the first few chapters includes ways of defining leadership and the importance of developing it within an organization.

Chapter four introduces some measuring devices that are commonly used in today's research. It identifies problems faced by field specialists when they design leadership studies and psychological scales. The next few chapters highlight some of the significant studies, their results, and ways to determine if any of the methodologies could be incorporated into your company's training techniques. The final chapters of Part I define research validation methods and summarize general conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the methods used to identify and measure the traits and behaviors of effective managers and leaders.

Kenneth Clark is past president and the Smith Richardson Senior Scientist at the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina. Miriam Clark is a consultant for leadership education at the center.

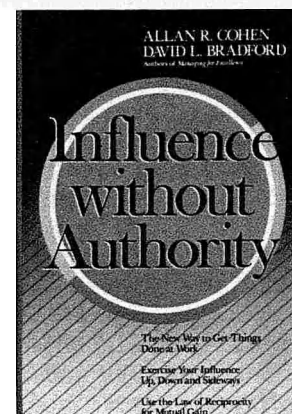
Measures of Leadership. 636 pp. West Orange, NJ: **Leadership Library of America**, 800/344-2414, \$59.50.

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Getting Things Done In the 1990s

Influence Without Authority, by Allan R. Cohen and David L. Bradford. (*The following is a combined book review and interview with Cohen, written by Marilyn Darling, president of Signet Consulting Group. It is adapted with permission from NETWORKING, a publication of the Massachusetts chapter of ASTD.*)

Picture yourself in a tractor trailer careening down a curvy road at high speed. Feel comfortable? That, according to Allan R. Cohen and David L. Bradford, authors of this "how-to" management book, is what doing business in the 1990s



will feel like. According to them, "Changes in economic forces, employee expectations, domestic and global competition, financial markets, technology, government regulation, and information availability" will all combine to make for a real rollercoaster ride to the end of the century.

Now, imagine sitting in that truck as it rolls along at breakneck speed—with no one at the wheel! The authors of *Influence Without Authority* proclaim that authority is dead or dying.

In a recent interview, Cohen, a professor of management at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, commented that we're facing "a basic loss of certainty. . . . The world is just changing at too fast a rate."

He argued that leaders used to be able to lead through single-handedly keeping an eye on the business and gauging future market needs. "Authority," he continued, "makes an enormous amount of sense when people in authority can really know." But now, "the world has become too complex for people on the top to know, and they have become more dependent on the people below."

What do the nineties look like from the inside out? The decade will be characterized by such phenomena as downsizing (or "right-sizing," if you prefer), flat organizations, "networked" organizational charts, information transfer, informal lines of communication, and shared ownership.

With less authority and more uncertainty, our days will now be filled with lobbying for resources, using power to get what we need,

following the Golden Rule, influencing our peers to get things done by our schedule. . . .

Wait a second. Following the Golden Rule? Where does the Golden Rule fit into a landscape filled with power and influence?

This is Cohen and Bradford's second time out as co-authors, their first joint effort being *Managing for Excellence. Influence Without Authority* is an odd mix of holistic philosophy and macroeconomics. The book is based on the authors' decades of experience consulting to organizations, and their basic interest in the processes of influence.

If you were to run this book through a centrifuge, the essence you would extract, in a few short words is, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Except that it has been modified slightly to say, "Do unto others as they want to be done unto."

Cohen and Bradford present an economic model that represents organizational reality as they see it.

Building on exchange theory, the authors' world of the 1990s is full of organizations that operate as marketplaces, populated with buyers and sellers who hold exchangeable currencies they are itching to trade. In this environment, successful "doers" are those who know what they want and know how to trade in currencies that are meaningful to their peers, subordinates, bosses, bosses' bosses, and peers' bosses.

Navigating the nineties

In such a world, the authors recommend some rules of the road:

1. Everyone with whom you interact should be seen as a potential ally. By viewing peers, bosses, and others whose paths you cross as strategic allies, you begin to recognize that everyone has legitimate stakes.

2. Ultimately, it pays to begin by making positive assumptions about your potential allies, rather than writing them off as being foolish or

conniving.

This is where the Golden Rule comes in. For one thing, it's very difficult to negotiate with someone whom you have written off as ignorant. If everyone who has ever been called an idiot behind his or her back were suddenly to disappear from the face of the earth, it would be a pretty lonely place for the rest of us. If we assume incompetence, greed, and folly, we are sure to find it. According to the authors, assuming competence and trustworthiness is the best way to increase the likelihood that it will be found.

3. In a marketplace, everyone is a potential customer. Everyone who finds him- or herself in a marketplace is there to buy or to sell. Keeping that fact in mind will help us recognize opportunities rather than just seeing problems and roadblocks.

4. We all have more power than we realize—we just don't understand which currencies we have in

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Organizational currencies are slightly more complicated than economic currencies, simply because there are more of them. In addition to good old dollars and cents, people in organizations trade in such currencies as resources, vision, challenge, verbal support, information, visibility, acceptance, and involvement. An inconspicuous gesture of support in a meeting, according to the authors, can be worth more than gold, if it is well-timed and if it is valued by the person you have supported.

Most "how-to" books could be written more clearly in about 10 pages. Well, the basic concepts of this book are so simple that they could probably be presented in five pages.

But while most "how-to" books take the "10 keys to success" approach, *Influence Without Authority* rests on a single coherent idea, and the book is filled with real ex-

amples of how the idea gets played out by real flesh-and-blood people inside of real brick-and-carpet companies. (More than once, you'll hear yourself saying, "Oh, yes . . . I know these people!") There's an inherent logic in the authors' ideas that make them easy to relate to almost any interaction.

Influence Without Authority doesn't just present a grand scheme for seeing the world, along with the requisite truisms. It makes a substantial case for the value of following these rules by showing how real-life decisions and communications affect people's ability to get things done, not just in one situation, but in case after case, from different industries, and from different points of view within the organization.

For many, the gap between "influence" and "manipulation" is uncomfortably narrow. *Influence Without Authority* is useful reading for those who are a little bit jittery about that topic. The authors assert

that, in a marketplace where the same faces keep popping up in different roles, bad trades are likely to come back to haunt you. "In an organization, people don't know who they are going to need the next day," comments Cohen.

Influence Without Authority does suffer from a few typical flaws of "how to" book. The authors fall into the syndrome of cutesy titles ("Me and My Big Mouth; You and Your Rabbit Ears") that are often more distracting than they are informative. And it can be difficult, in organizing how-to advice on "soft-tech" topics such as relationship skills, to avoid presenting the same information over and over again, each time from a slightly different perspective. I often got the feeling that I was going around in circles.

Those flaws aside, *Influence Without Authority* is a refreshing description of how good guys can win. I asked Cohen what would happen if everyone in an organization operated according to these

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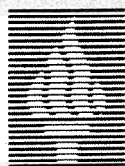
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principles. His response went back to the marketplace metaphor: "The whole level of the economy rises."

He explained that, in his experience, when everyone trades skillfully, more trading gets done, and trading tends to occur along lines that are compatible with the organization's goals.

That means that when two people disagree, both points of view are recognized by both people, said Cohen in our interview. "One of them can say, 'Hey, I want this, but if you can show me why your way is better for the company, let me figure out how to help you do it.' In the long run, I'll get mine back. I don't have to win every battle." Every day brings a new opportunity to trade with your allies.

The fundamental idea Cohen and Bradford have articulated here is that in an effective market economy, it's most convenient to trade in a common currency. "In the long run," said Cohen, "vision is the most wonderful currency of all." Thus, vision unites influence and "the greater good" in a real and necessary way.

But what of leadership?

So, if authority is dying, what will a leader do in the 1990s? In our interview, Cohen observed that "the person at the top doesn't know any more. But what the person at the top can do is to create the conditions for people to find each other until enough smart people agree so that the leader will be convinced to go ahead."

The leader, in other words, can set the stage, learn from the troops what he or she couldn't possibly know alone, and then make decisions based on the broadened foundation of information.

Setting the stage for an effective market economy is important to Cohen and Bradford's way of thinking for another reason: when in Rome, people tend to do as the Romans do.

"I think people are shaped by the situations they are in," said Cohen. "In companies that are successful—that are generous with how they treat the people who work for them—people tend to make better

assumptions about other people. They say, 'Gee, I'm surrounded by smart people.' In companies that are penurious with the way they reward people—where people feel there is a scarcity economy—people tend to make much more negative assumptions about each other."

Leaders always have played, and will continue to play, an important role in setting the assumptions upon which people will do their trading.

The message for trainers

Influence Without Authority does not specifically address the challenge of training in an environment in which the force of authority is diminishing. But we did discuss the implications for trainers in our conversation.

First and foremost, Cohen said, in order for trainers to be able to fully participate in the organization of the nineties, they need to break some ensconced stereotypes. His comments were fairly pointed. When I observed that trainers often complain about having little power, he quipped, "And they often deserve to have as little as they get."

He observed that many trainers don't understand the business. "They haven't made any effort to figure out how their company makes money; what its products do in the market that other companies' products don't do." Cohen doesn't see them making it a point to know what keeps the boss up at 2 in the morning. "They do a million things to make themselves less powerful," Cohen asserted. "So why should it be surprising that they are powerless?" Trainers need to understand, and trade in, the currencies that are of the most value to their clients.

According to Cohen, it behooves trainers to respond to the rate of change, both by stimulating continuous learning inside the organization and by taking on the challenge of continuously learning themselves.

Trainers can't afford to treat every problem as a nail, just because they want excuses to pull out their favorite hammers. Cohen believes that if trainers are to be valuable to their internal customers, they need to understand their customers' worlds and how they are changing.

"If you don't," he observed, "trainees know it. So, you've got to get out and know the organization. It's good for trainers to go out for a while and work for other departments. Or if that's not feasible, to shadow managers or future trainees for a day or two to see what's on their minds."

Even more, said Cohen, "trainers need to expand the definition of training beyond the classroom." In other words, the classroom of the nineties needs to extend to the office. Learning needs to be linked to experience, both by including learning expectations in performance evaluations and by helping internal customers to review and assess their successes and failures in the context of what they learned in the classroom.

Trainers can be invaluable in helping their customers develop their career paths, argues Cohen. Trainers can help their customers work with managers to explicitly articulate the managers' expectations regarding future career growth. In that way, both the trainer and the trainee can work to make sure that training is relevant.

Personally, trainers need to assess their own levels of continuous learning. They should ask themselves the following questions:

- What management literature do I read daily? (For example, the *Wall Street Journal* or *Business Week*.)
- What business meetings do I attend that are not directly related to training?
- Do I make it a point to eat lunch regularly with new people, in order to gain a fresh perspective?
- Do I work to build new alliances, or do I nourish a "we/they" mentality?
- Do I have a short-term and long-term development plan for my own learning? If so, how am I doing?

Just as leaders won't be able to rely on what worked in the past to lead their organizations into the careening nineties, so trainers need to abandon the notion that they can know it all, or that the expertise that makes them effective today will be enough to make them effective tomorrow. Trainers need to work continually to find better ways to

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(A three-day workshop based on this book has just been made available through Organizational Dynamics of Burlington, Massachusetts.)

Influence Without Authority. 305 pp. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons. 800/225-5945, \$19.95.

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Additional Reading

Managing Lives: Corporate Women and Social Change, by Sue J.M. Freeman. 262 pp. Amherst MA:

University of Massachusetts Press, 413/545-2217, hardcover \$35, softcover \$13.95.

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The Responsible Manager: Practical Strategies for Ethical Decision Making, by Michael Rion. 134 pp. San Francisco, CA: **Harper & Row**, 800/242-7737, \$15.95.

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Working for the Japanese: Inside Mazda's American Auto Plant, by Joseph J. Fucini and Suzy Fucini. 258 pp. New York, NY: **The Free Press**, 212/702-5577, \$19.95.

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The Quality and Productivity Equation: American Corporate Strategies for the 1990s, edited by Ross E. Robson. 338 pp. Cambridge, MA: **Productivity Press**, 800/274-9911 or 617/497-5146, \$29.95.

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