

College of Business Book Review by David Coffee

Title: "The 100-Mile Walk"

Authors: Sander A. Flaum & Jonathon A. Flaum with Mechele Flaum

Publisher: AMACOM

Length: 255 pages

Reading Time: 5-6 hours

Reading rating: 7 (1= very difficult; 10= very easy)

Overall rating: 4 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

"The 100-mile Walk" is about the reflections of a father and son on the essence of leadership. While intended as a book on leadership, in some ways the book transcends its intended focus to explore the broader qualities that make us what we are as human beings.

The book is structured around a father, Sander Flaum and a son, Jonathon Flaum, who undertake a 100-mile walk, discussing the essential elements of leadership. An important part of this structure is that the father and son represent the distinctively different and divergent paradigms of two generations and two philosophies. Sander (Republican, Jewish, MBA, 65, founder of Fordham University's Leadership Forum, and CEO of a successful business) trades perspectives with his son, Jonathon (Independent, Zen Buddhist, MA-Philosophy of Religion, MFA-Theater, 36, and a successful entrepreneur).

The book flows around the father and son discussions of the leaders appearing at the Fordham Leadership Forum and the messages these noted civic and business leaders deliver to Sander's MBA students. Folks like Thomas Von Essen, New York City Fire Commissioner during 9/11; Bill Toppets, president of MetLife International; Faith Popcorn, futurist and marketing consultant to the Fortune 500; Nancy Lubin, founder of Dress for Success; Father Joseph O'Hare, former president of Fordham University; Reverend Joseph M. McShane, current Fordham President; Frances Hesselbein, chair of the Leader to Leader Institute; Howard Safir, former New York City Police Commissioner; Jeff Rich, CEO of Affiliated Computer Services, and Senator John Glenn. If this isn't enough to spark your interest, the book has a touch of local flavor, and features an analysis of the leadership style of one of our own prominent leaders, John Bardo, chancellor of Western Carolina University. Jonathon lives in Asheville and as some of you will know, writes a column for the Citizen Times on creativity in the workplace. Indeed, much of the "100-mile walk" takes place on the nearby trails of our beautiful Smoky Mountains. The result of all of this is a surprisingly unique and sometimes provocative analysis which is both enlightening and entertaining.

I recommend this book to those of us who have more than a passing curiosity about leadership. This book may not define leadership in an academic context, but it is remarkably successful in describing how leadership is executed by the numerous leaders it profiles. The strength of the book however, is the exchange

of views between father and son which serve to generate new perspectives on what makes up a common ground in this evasive and difficult to define concept.

The book reflects and contrasts the old and new paradigms of business. Jonathon's role in the book is to share his perspectives from a personal vantage point on Sander's narratives. If you are looking for the traditional rhetoric in leadership workshops, conferences, and books, this is not the book. If you want leadership dissected from an academic perspective, this is not the book. Instead, what the reader gets is to be let in on a most interesting discussion between two generations and two philosophies. You are left to judge for yourself the lessons learned.

David Coffee is an Associate Professor of Accounting in the College of Business at Western Carolina University. For previously reviewed books, visit our Website at www.wcu.edu/cob/.