

Book Review by Michael Smith

Title: "The Three Faces of Leadership: Manager, Artist, Priest"

Authors: Mary Jo Hatch, Monika Kostera, and Andrzej K Kozminski

Publisher: Blackwell

Length: 169 pages

Price: \$32.95

Reading time: 4 hours

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

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

Readers will recognize the "Harvard Business Review" as a source for leading edge thinking for managers, and through interviews with famous CEOs, a chronicle of how executives think. "The Three Faces of Leadership" taps this rich resource by searching CEO interviews from 1990-2000 in a stimulating examination of business leadership. For those who want to become an inspirational force for business performance in their organizations, this book represents a valuable resource. For those who seek to understand leadership, and perhaps develop their leadership abilities, this book presents an interesting and well-grounded perspective with fresh insights.

That a book would find that effective leaders are good story tellers is hardly new. What is new about this book is that the authors analyze what the CEOs have said, and arrive at the conclusion that there are three aspects to the mythological aspects of leadership. First, that executives must be organized and goal-directed suggests the face of the manager. However, the rational model of management hardly serves to inspire great efforts from those who might follow. Leaders must reach the emotional level in followers to create commitment to group aspiration, and this requires the face of the artist. The authors note that the artist can reach beyond the rational level to address organizational culture, change, vision, values and group identity. However, merely addressing these elements is not enough.

To be truly successful, the authors contend that the best executive leaders must also display the face of the priest. The priest is necessary to infuse the other aspects of leadership with virtue and faith. When we look at outstanding organizational leadership, performance is enhanced when the leader can portray shared elements of aspiration in a way that makes their pursuit noble. While I would not argue that business leadership should seek to replace religion, clearly, we can find examples of inspirational leadership among religious leaders.

When the three faces of leadership come together, we see influence through stories that bring a mythological verve to the daily, perhaps seemingly mundane pursuit of organizational ends. Inspirational leaders bring the conviction of the ministerial profession to the accomplishment of lofty, almost impossible goals. By bringing an artistic sensitivity to the story, such leaders help other people picture and gain emotional attachment to these goals. Finally, managerial orchestration of the tasks that must be accomplished on the path to goal attainment helps to ensure sustained progress.

The theses presented by the authors can readily be applied in examination of leadership outside the business realm. For example, given the timing of this book review, we might examine the leadership of Martin Luther King. Given his training as a minister, it surely does not stretch credibility to suggest that he brought elements of the persona of the priest to his leadership, but we can also see the value of this background in his leadership. His message benefited from delivery in a well-honed tone and cadence, and he readily found religious reference to support the virtuous nature of the endeavor. Dr. King was the artist when he evoked powerful visual imagery of the noble vision he advocated. The intersection of these two aspects of leadership is powerfully evident in many of his speeches. Few who heard of his dream can forget the central theme. Few of today's supposed leaders can claim such eloquence and persuasiveness. Finally, Dr. King was the manager when he orchestrated activities so that the civil rights movement could continue to push for change over time.

“The Three Faces of Leadership” represents a remarkable synthesis of leadership knowledge through the example of notable business leaders. Perhaps this perspective will help business leaders learn to move beyond their rational bent in seeking to lead others. As this book aptly shows, only by moving beyond their managerial personas and addressing the non-rational faces of leadership can business executives expect to reach their potential as leaders.

Michael Smith is MBA Program Director and Associate Professor of Management and International Business in the College of Business at Western Carolina University. For previously reviewed books, visit our website at www.wcu.edu/cob/.