

## College of Business Book Review by Louis E. Buck, Ph.D.

Title: "Your Inner CEO: Unleash the Executive Within"

Author: Allan Cox

Publisher: Career Press

Length: 227 pages (incl. appendix)

Price: \$24.99

Reading Time: 5 Hours

Reading Rating: 4 (1=very difficult; 10=very easy)

Overall Rating: 3 (1=average; 4=outstanding)

Allan Cox has addressed the question that has been asked countless times by investors and business executives, "What separates some outstanding CEOs from the rest and how did they get there?" What separates this book from the others is how he proceeds to address this question. The reader will find this book to be a slow read if they take time to seriously consider the self-evaluative questions that are asked in each chapter. In similar fashion this book should be considered as series of steps, rather than a simple guidebook, in a much longer journey of self-realization and continual growth as a leader, mentor and team member. As such the audience for this book is anyone who has already ascended to the top spot in an organization or aspires to get there in the future.

He begins to answer this age old question by introducing the concepts of "grounding" and "Destiny". In short, grounding requires the reader to do a brutally honest self-assessment of themselves and their goals. One of the author's keener insights is that we will be able to do a better job of answering these questions by observing what we do or where did our feet take us rather than what we say about our goals and motives. One of the things that make the book an interesting read is the author's use of examples taken from clients he has worked with. These glimpses personalize the message and make the issues easier to put into context.

One especially interesting chapter deals with the responsibilities a Board of Directors has in dealing with and developing a CEO, not just in the first year or two but through their entire tenure as CEO. Many of the traits that make a CEO successful in dealing with his management team are also keys to working with a board. These traits have been discussed by authors since there have been management texts, but they are well organized and set into a context that makes them personal to the reader. Some of the insights are "right on" in their application in the business world today. An example that strikes home is the use of consensus building as a management style has been grossly overused by some CEOs. The author contrasts consensus with skillful collaboration that achieves the best decision rather than settling for the lowest common denominator that is often the result of forced consensus.

The author's diagnostic self-examination required of a superior CEO extends to the company as well. Unless a senior management team can critically assess what the company is rather than what it says it is then making change and moving the company in the right direction is difficult if not impossible. The individual and organizational

changes proposed by the author are not for the faint of heart or those who find it difficult to see the world as it is rather than the way they want it to be. It is likely that some readers will struggle to achieve the transformation suggested in this book without the assistance of a skilled guide or consultant, like the author. Individuals who have attained the desired goal of getting to the CEO's office will find it challenging to accept the fact that the traits that got them to the office may not be sufficient to enable them to keep that office, or perhaps to be as successful as they would like to be in the CEO role.

The author does a good job with a very difficult subject by using the situations of former clients to ground the reader in the message being delivered. This book would be a good outside reading for an MBA program in addition to being a worthwhile reading for other audiences as well.

Dr. Louis Buck is the Wesley Elingburg Distinguished Professor for Business Innovation and Director, Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation in the College of Business at Western Carolina University. His interests include entrepreneurial education, economic development and corporate finance. For previously reviewed books, visit our Web site at [www.wcu.edu/cob/](http://www.wcu.edu/cob/).