



# Leading Tomorrow's Nonprofits

*What will the organization of tomorrow be like? Will you be prepared to lead it?*

BY TERRENCE FERNSLER

## *The Leader of the Future*

*Edited by Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and Richard Beckhard. 319 pages. Hardcover. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.*

**T**he *Leader of the Future* is a series of short, thought-provoking essays by successful business, nonprofit, and government leaders. They tell us that leadership is changing. The old hierarchical management technique does not work well today. A more cooperative team approach does.

Take the time to read and reflect on these essays. Together, they are an excellent way to prepare for the organization of the future (the not very distant future). Since, under this new model, we will all be leaders at one time or another, it is a book for us all.

As the essays explain, organizations are increasingly "bundling" services and delegating leadership. For example, the fundraising department provides leadership to obtain resources for a new program, while the public relations department takes leadership to see that prospective users know about the program. Each step requires a different type of expertise, and leadership is passed from one team to the next.

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As leadership shifts within an organization, we all must learn how to lead—and how to be good followers. This means first being able to lead ourselves—acknowledging our own strengths and shortcomings, building on our strengths, and improving or compensating for our shortcomings. It means being able to do the following:

- Serve the organization through open, honest communications and mentoring.
- Be flexible.
- Recognize that a leader is part of a team, not a "boss/god."

Good leaders know that the organization's most valuable commodities are its employees' skills. Thus, they make sure that everyone in the organization is given a stake in it. The more flexible they are in meeting employees' needs, the more productive those employees will be.

In the book's foreword, Peter Drucker points out that successful lead-

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ers come in all forms. What they have in common is that they don't judge people on personal standards, but they do have high performance standards for their workers.

The leaders who were selected to write essays for this book also have one other thing in common: They spread the credit. They know there are times to step back and let an expert take the lead. They know how to match the organization's needs with the skills of those within it. They know that they succeed not by themselves alone but because of the effort their team puts out.

Successful organizations are less concerned with control, and more concerned with performance. Good leaders know that customer relations people can

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respond quicker and more accurately to client needs than management. Allowing teams to develop solutions strengthens the organization.

Under the new leadership, solutions come from the bottom up; leaders merely coordinate it all. Employees are told what needs to be done—and then allowed to do it. A certain amount of trust is involved—trust that those within the organization will work for its betterment.

Flexibility, team-building, and distribution of responsibility all argue in favor of the Hobbesian belief that people are naturally good—that successful leaders of tomorrow trust in the goodness of people. Historically, society has swung between this belief and the belief in the need for control. This book implies that we live in an exciting time because our leaders are making the move back toward trusting. ■



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