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Business book reviews: Leadership Sustainability and Own the Room



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By JIM PAWLAK

Special Contributor

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Leadership Sustainability

Dave Ulrich and **Norm Smallwood** (McGraw-Hill, \$30)

The authors' research uncovered five distinct, yet interrelated, roles of a leader: strategist, executor, talent manager, human capital developer and personal proficiency — leaders learn, too.

Of these, the last one is the key to sustainability; it's about continuous improvement as an individual. Without an upward-sloping learning curve, a leader's ability to use the rest of his skills to guide the organization from Point A to Point B withers. The authors identified seven disciplines a leader must develop to keep on track.

1. **Simplicity.** Set clear priorities that define what's important. Filter data into a few important points; tell stories because they cut through numbers and make change personal. Forget your top 100 things; Steve Jobs maintained a three-thing list.
2. **Time.** Look back at your calendar for the last 90 days. Think about the amount of time linked to accomplishment, routine and intention. Break time into three-hour, three-day and three-week increments, and audit every 90 days.
3. **Accountability.** Leaders keep their word and hold others to the same standard.
4. **Resources.** While the buck stops at the top, "leadership is a team, not an individual activity." Coach, do not manage. Keep people on the same page while encouraging dialogue.
5. **Tracking.** Focus measuring and key performance indicators with three questions in mind: "How are we doing?" "How can we do better?" "What if?"
6. **Melioration.** Making something better, a corollary of No. 4, recognizes that innovators come up with new ideas by thinking and acting differently than others. As long as they're on the company page, the work of divergent thinkers (i.e., questioners, observers, networkers and experimenters) moves the company forward.
7. **Emotion.** By connecting change with personal value, a leader brings passion to work every day.

A free app for Apple and Android devices that helps leaders employ the seven disciplines can be downloaded at leadershipsustainability.com/startme.

Own the Room

Amy Jenss Su and **Muriel Maignan Wilkins** (Harvard Business Review Press, \$25)

The authors teach you to develop a signature voice, an authentic presence that connects well with colleagues and allows them to connect with you.

The signature voice considers the perspectives, functions and agendas of others and the organization. It defines authority in terms of your ability to influence others because of what you know, say and do, not by your title. It shows respect for others regardless of their position.

Your signature voice takes root in your strengths. You have to match them to the scope of your role within the context of the roles of others. Ask one question about your current role: "How do I add value?"

The authors emphasize that building a signature voice involves building your personal brand around what you're known for.

Jim Pawlak reviews business books for The Dallas Morning News.

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