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Advancing Women In Leadership

## **Review of *Survival Kit for Leaders***

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In a world where scandals and corruption appear in the daily headlines, effective leadership is critical in just about any field. Kunick and Lester's *Survival Kit for Leaders* offers a refreshing look at how to develop and/or maintain quality leadership skills. The book's eight chapters offer clear explanations on how to be most effective for new or experienced leaders. Each chapter is concluded with thought-provoking questions suitable for discussion in a classroom or group setting. The book also offers easy to remember mnemonics to help aspiring leaders remember important concepts offered by the authors. Well-known examples of outstanding current or past leaders such as Jackie Robinson and Anne Sullivan are used to illustrate key concepts as well. This interactive and motivational book offers a powerful yet practical approach to developing leadership skills.

The book opens with a lengthy discussion regarding the definition or characteristics of an effective leader. Kunich and Lester advocate that the key to leadership is found not in power, but in empowerment. They note how good leaders are able to motivate and support their subordinates, and they are able to "couple technical expertise with credibility and trustworthiness." The authors focus on how to balance the differing skills needed for leadership and management; they also emphasize the importance of having a vision for yourself, your followers, and your organization. The book continues this dialogue for understanding what leadership is, noting that there is no single definition of leadership. Being an effective leader is often situational and requires hard work and strong interpersonal skills. In the words of

these authors, there are "no simple solutions or 'trick shots' in developing sound leadership qualities." Also included is a helpful list of 20 leadership characteristics, including such important qualities as responsibility, enthusiasm, integrity, and flexibility.

A quite thorough description of the "Profile of a Leader" then follows, with an in-depth case study of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish citizen who saved the lives of almost 100,000 Jews during World War II. Kunick and Lester describe a set of leadership characteristics referred to as the "Wallenberg Effect." These characteristics include knowledge, objective, ingenuity, confidence, and courage. A modern-day application of these characteristics is offered in a description of the passengers of Flight 93 on September 11, 2001 ; the authors analyze how the doomed passengers on this flight that crashed over Pennsylvania demonstrated the five characteristics of the Wallenberg Effect. Demonstrating the importance of good leadership in two distinct but critical time periods - the Holocaust and the tragedies of September 11 - the authors are quite effective in making their point.

Mentoring and feedback are then featured in each of the next two chapters, each with an easy to remember mnemonic of what the authors believe to be most important about these qualities. MENTORING is used to remember a leader's responsibility to do the following things: model, empathize, nurture, teach, organize, respond, inspire, network, and goal-set. Most of these responsibilities are nicely illustrated with a real-life person who exemplified the quality being discussed. The authors use FEEDBACK to remind readers of what effective feedback should be: frequent, early, evidence-based, dialogue-oriented, beneficial, accurate, clear, and kind. With thorough explanations of how each of these items can be accomplished, prospective leaders should be well-equipped to provide constructive, results-producing feedback to their employees.

The book then moves into a very thorough description of the difference between leadership - *doing the right things* - and management - *doing things right* . The authors use a diagram of "Quality Quadrants" to demonstrate how leadership and management skills work together to produce the best results. From "doing right things right" to "doing wrong things wrong," the authors offer detailed explanation of what works and what does not. Following this explanation, the authors point out that above all, a leader must be law-abiding. They emphasize that obeying the law is the absolute minimum a leader must do, and in today's world of fallen corporate leaders and political corruption, such a message should not be taken for granted. Kunich and Lester emphasize seven points for leaders in following the law: (1) don't be stupid; (2) don't discriminate; (3) don't cheat; (4) don't abuse your position; (5) be nice to your "mother nature;" (6) watch your mouth; (7) play fair. While these recommendations may seem simple, they are critical to the effectiveness of any leader.

The book closes with a lengthy discussion of time management for leaders. Essentially, the authors ascribe to the philosophy of Jeffrey Mayer: "If you haven't got time to do it right, when will you find the time to do it over?" They provide excellent ideas for a variety of concepts concerning time management, including

how to budget your time, how to delegate, how to choose what things to leave undone, how to work from lists, how to stay organized, and how to manage technology. The tips are helpful yet easy to understand, and even those things that readers may already know are worth being repeated. Two mini "survival kits" complete the *Survival Kit for Leaders*; one is "A Five Minute Survival Kit for Emergencies," which analyzes specific tasks for different levels of leadership (i.e., strategic, organizational, direct, and personal). The second appendix is a "Survival Kit for Your Pocket," which lists 26 one-line reminders for being an exemplary leader. Both of these mini survival kits are handy tools for summarizing the book's intent with just a few words. While no substitute for reading the book in its entirety, they are useful pieces for reinforcement or review.

The *Survival Kit for Leaders* is an easy read, but one that is well worth your time. The ideas set forth by Kunich and Lester are simple yet powerful. They offer practical ideas for developing or maintaining strong leadership skills, and they do so with interactive questions and stories that keep the reader actively engaged. The book can easily be used for enriching coursework or training in leadership skills, but it also has a place as a personal motivational tool for practicing or aspiring leaders. The authors intended for the *Survival Kit for Leaders* to cause readers to think, both actively and interactively. It was designed to foster opportunities for readers to develop, analyze, and evaluate their own ideas regarding leadership. With these goals in mind, the book is a huge success.

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