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Book Review

Leading with Values: Positivity, Virtue and High Performance by Edward D. Hess and Kim S. Cameron. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 238 pages.

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Researchers in Positive Psychology have had a great deal of influence on the fields of organizational behavior and business management in the 2000s. Academics and management practitioners have leveraged this movement to advance research and application through their work in Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) and Positive Organizational Behavior (POB). As a discipline, POS seeks to advance our understanding of what creates the best of human functioning in organizational contexts (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). POB constitutes the study of positive human strengths and competencies, and how they can be facilitated, assessed, and managed to improve performance in the workplace (Nelson & Cooper, 2007).

Contributions to this collective effort use inquiry to discover what *thriving* looks like in the world of work and organizations. This focus on the good, the positive, and optimal functioning is not a short-term fad. I say this without hesitation because the output produced by this community has instilled fresh dialogue and has edified our understanding of how to do good, be well, and to learn how to support others in doing the same. One of the latest editions to this compendium of scholarship is *Leading with Values: Positivity, Virtues, and High Performance*, by Ed Hess and Kim Cameron. The self-proclaimed goal of this book is to “inspire, to inform, and to affect behavior” (p. 3). In this review I consider how the authors move to accomplish this.

Leading with Values. presents eleven chapters, with the preponderance setting forth their message via narratives, to describe leaders who have engaged in exemplary values-based actions. In the ongoing shift from control to values-based management (O’Toole, 1996), Hess and Cameron assume that extraordinary organizational effects result from an emphasis on virtues, values, and positivity. While the case studies in this book tend to focus on individuals, the authors frame their purpose in a macro context, stating that the fundamental message is that “businesses can act ethically and treat all stakeholders with respect and dignity, without sacrificing profits or performance” (p. 2). Putting the spotlight directly on leaders becomes the means to magnify and amplify the beneficial effects of elevating the positive. By implication, this will help to guide those in positions of authority to make full use of their roles as exemplars, stewards, vision creators, and sources of motivation for others. The authors are quite clear about identifying their audience as those who “are inclined toward the good and the true” (p. 3). Who can say no to that? In this sense the book should have wide appeal. But because the case selections tend to reflect men who currently hold positions of leadership in the US, they target a more discrete audience. Nevertheless, each chapter provides take-aways that can stir reflection and prompt additional discourse, application, and future research.

Robert Drazin, Ed Hess, and Farah Mihoubi begin the collection of articles by modeling how values are taught through stories. Offering one of their own, they explain how a family extended its values and perpetuated them through servant leaders within an organization. In Chapter 1 they show how their values became adopted by employees, becoming part of routine behavior through promotion and ongoing reinforcement. The key point for this reader was never to take a values-based culture for granted; to create this kind of workplace environment requires continuous development and support. Gary Bouch affirms this point in Chapter 2, describing the efforts that FedEx Freight has undergone to create a people-centric culture.

Here we experience the pensive moments of leaders involved in an organizational change event, and how it ultimately contributes to a renewed commitment to people. The effort led to a “People First” approach to management, helping to promote self-knowledge, personal development, and education. This involved a robust list of assignments for leaders, including instructions to mend relationships, select accountability partners, and find a mentor as well as other explicit means that put values into measurable actions. To his credit, the author reported the strength of the top-down aspects of the leaders’ efforts, but was also candid about his concern regarding the bottom-up plan. However, the intervention may have been more productive had it been all-inclusive, inviting workers along with external stakeholders to become fully engaged as equal partners in designing the corporate strategy. While this case suggests a separation between leadership and workers, the program was recognized as a new beginning that must be maintained “for a lifetime,” thus affirming that FedEx leaders are aware that values-based leadership must continually be rejuvenated.

In another chapter, Karl Weick addresses the issue of values by targeting high reliability organizations (HRO). Drawing on his classic work examining responses to crisis, he looks at how leader alertness, issue framing, and hubris come together to impact organizations. He describes how the values exercised by leaders in daily routines must be complemented by continuous learning and attentiveness, or complacency will prevail. Weick takes us through the example of a wildland firefighter leader who manages crisis as an unfolding problem in sensemaking, continually updating and revising his response with transparency and a self-correcting rationale. We learn that HROs “work backward” in their efforts to avoid and prevent mistakes. In so doing they demonstrate mindfulness in each present moment. A memorable point from this chapter is that values need to be taken very seriously, which means being clear about the mistakes you don’t want to make. Furthermore, leaders need to be wary of those who pay too much attention to success, simplicity, strategy, anticipation, and hierarchy. As per usual, Weick leaves us with a sense of having learned something. Similar to his reminder to “drop your tools” (1996), he helps us take a step back, encouraging closer examination of one’s motives and cognitive processes. The message, in part, is that even in crisis leaders must continually examine how they view the situation, because this has demonstrable effects on decision-making capabilities. He masterfully pulls his work together to show us that being wary, mindful, and developing the capacity for recovery from setbacks will provide us with invaluable assets in value-based leadership.

Chapters 4 and 11 address values-centered leadership in the US Marine Corps; specifically, the key role of spirituality in leadership and how values are developed within this organization. In

the first of these two contributions, Dan Yaroslaski and Paolo Tripodi explain that their success is inextricably linked to their personal values in a Higher Power, which are tied to group commitment. This shared faith helps leaders demonstrate excellence in combat operations through the presence of extremely powerful group bonds. While this chapter provides an interesting historical description of the Corps, emphasizing its Asian heritage and collectivist approach to shaping men of right action, such strength and confidence is still subject to the influences of hubris, which we know must be explicitly managed. In part, Michael Parkyn addresses this concern in Chapter 11, describing the means for how the Corps goes about building values within their organization, one Marine at a time.

Parkyn explains that this begins with recruitment, only selecting those individuals “who have the makings of a good Marines...like raw iron filings to a magnetized, polished steel sword” (p. 219). The author provides an overview of the Corps’ stated values, training, mentoring, and other program requirements. Parkyn goes on to describe the robust nature of the ongoing training and educational processes, including a reading list worthy of bookmarking for personal and/or classroom use. This chapter underscores the importance of screening, evaluation, and immersion in developing values-based leaders. Taken together, Chapters 4 and 11 affirm the essential nature of lifelong learning in developing values-based leaders. Questions remain, however, regarding the standardization of such practices in organizations. For example, given the reality of recruitment quotas, one wonders if screening processes sustain this level of selectivity. Moreover, with a proclaimed shared belief in a higher power, are those with atheistic views rejected from service or considered value-less leaders? These questions underscore the importance of understanding how personal core values can be respected and leveraged in diverse and cross-cultural settings, in an effort to create and strengthen leadership competency.

Chapters 5 and 6 tell stories of transformation that are fueled by interpersonal care. Ed Hess describes the role of spirituality in one firm’s quest to become the country’s most admired company. A process of organizational change that aligns high performance with a giving culture is a good story, but hearing a leader say, “learn about our values by watching what I do” (p. 107)—now that’s worth reading! The leadership goal at Synovus Financial Corporation was to uphold their values-based foundation, deeply rooted in “the Golden Rule and Servant Leadership” (p. 15). This proves to be a challenge, as the company works to rejuvenate a culture where leaders are expected to not only work for the organization but for all of the employees as well. Monica Woreline follows with a chapter in eloquent prose, describing the experiences of a hospital unit staff leader. Her reflections provide compelling insight into the nature of genuinely valuing others in the workplace, the epitome of values-based leadership. These two chapters demonstrate that helping people thrive is achievable and can build workplace performance. But to do so, leaders must provide purpose and meaning—honoring each person and their role.

Kim Cameron, Maryann Glynn, and Heather Jamerson examine principled leadership that is exercised or lost; specifically, when leaders take action in tough times, but particularly when the challenging situation actually works against the application of their principles. These authors show how positive actions emerge from strengths, as well as from negative circumstances. This is an important contribution to POS, as it begins to link disorder and dysfunction with achievement, aspirations, and performance (see Linley et al., 2006). In Chapter 7, Cameron’s intensive case study helps us to see how hostility, negativity, and apathy can be overcome

through leaders' exertion of values. He shows us how values-based action and monetary success can go hand in hand. This chapter is compelling, not only because of the scholarly rigor, but because it shows how to overcome constraints within an institution, as well as within a community at large. Cameron's work with colleague Mark Lavine (2006) in *Making the Impossible Possible: Leading Extraordinary Success: The Rocky Flats Story* provides greater insight into this research. While some readers may be familiar with this study, his restatement of the ten leadership principles in this chapter provides a concentrated reminder of its key findings.

Continuing on this theme of exercising values, Glynn and Jamerson take a closer look at Kenneth Lay, the former CEO of Enron. While most of us have had extensive exposure to articles on this subject, this piece is thought-provoking because it provides a broader context in analyzing Enron's corporate collapse and working to understand the societal and cultural factors that led to it. Peeling the onion of leadership character, they remind us to be wary of the environment, which includes political, regulatory, and economic changes. They suggest specific actions that can support internal awareness so that external pressures do not mindlessly influence leaders' daily routines, decision-making, and ethics.

The value of "mending relationships" through forgiveness, first introduced in Chapter 2, is continued in Chapter 9. Here, David Bright summarizes his findings from research examining forgiveness with managers, truck drivers, and dock workers. He explicates the concept and presents a framework for understanding why it may or may not occur in the workplace. A key contribution from his work is in illustrating how forgiveness is based upon internal motivations and personal choice and can impact performance positively. This work is followed, quite appropriately, with an examination of how to respond to organizational trauma.

Edward Powley and Scott Taylor make an important distinction in leaders' responses to traumatic events. They look not only at the actions, but also at how leaders go about leadership during the crisis period. Given the increased occurrence of these kinds of events, coupled with heightened global tensions and societal pressures, values-based leadership preparation seems more important than ever. Such leadership implies readying oneself for trauma by practicing awareness and sensitivity. The authors provide a path for how to respond in crisis, which, in this reviewer's opinion, is a salient read for anyone. Their work on recovery and resilience is at the center of values-based leadership and is applicable to every global citizen.

In all, this collection of articles reminds us of why we are inspired to lead and to help others through our shared values. It left this reader curious, interested to see how I can be more explicit in my application of values in organizational life. It refreshed my connection to what I perceive to be good; thus, I felt informed and motivated. With further reflection, however, I was also led to think about what we still do not know. Let me explain what I mean, in an effort to further develop this dialogue and to help extend the authors' message.

For cases that focused on individuals, the main character is usually a man in a position of authority, typically in a hierarchically structured organization. One chapter and several support roles demonstrate values-based leadership from those not already in senior leadership positions. This same chapter was the only main story featuring a woman's experience. Thus, the implicit theory of "think manager-think male" seems to be reflected in this book (see Schein, 1973,

1975). In describing this concept, Ryan and Haslam (2007) highlight the prescriptive impacts of how spontaneous categorization of leaders, being male or female, can be diminished with the repeated pairing of masculinity and management (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Moreover, underrepresentation of women can inadvertently legitimate inequality via absence (Ely & Padavic, 2005). Perhaps future POS contributions will attend to this concern, moving to deepen our understanding of values-based leadership from a broader perspective.

In addition, while the Eastern culture was referenced, a Western understanding of leadership is dominant. This is not to say that leadership and values-based principles are completely different in other cultures, but the implementation of these values may differ, given the context. With the stories presented, we do not know what does or does not apply to different types of leaders and to other populations. Assuming that the values are largely universal, we still do not know if there are differences in how they are implemented, given leaders' gender and ethnicity. Do these values apply to mixed populations, within different organizational structures, and across cultures? Even if the core principles are agreed upon, interpretations of how to implement them may vary. Therefore, the development of this topic will benefit from a broader view, selecting cases that present more diverse populations, different organizational forms, and a variety of cultural contexts.

While these points may go beyond the stated aims of the book, perhaps these thoughts will provide fodder for additional consideration when leaders think about the application of the ideas proposed in *Leading with Values*. As we move to consider **how** to apply values-based leadership in global contexts, it is likely that our conversation will become more complex. But perhaps this book and continued dialogue will help us to get closer to *the good and the true*.

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