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John F. Kennedy on Leadership ***The Lessons and Legacy of a President*** **Amacom - 2007 (228 pages paperback)** **Author John A. Barnes** **ISBN 0-8144-0834-6**

Some of the most effective books to read on leadership development are biographies that examine historical characters. One of the most popular was Donald Phillip's *Lincoln on Leadership* which became a best seller. John F. Kennedy on Leadership falls into this category and illuminates the leadership skills of JFK in a way seldom appreciated.

Most people think of Kennedy as a privileged son of a wealthy businessman with powerful political connections who used his good looks and charisma to ultimately achieve the presidency. However, little attention has been given to his difficult struggle with a chronic disease, a severe physical handicap and personal shyness. Further, few authors have closely analyzed how well Kennedy mastered the new medium of television, or fostered teamwork within the Whitehouse. What about the leadership skills that inspired him to create the Peace Corps, or the way he cautiously maneuvered during the Berlin crisis or the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962?

Author John Barnes deftly covers various attributes of sound leadership like vision, resilience, communication, team building, decision making and crisis management. He takes each of these qualities and weaves them into actual historical episodes within Kennedy's brief life. For example, Barnes clearly demonstrates JFK's powerful use of *vision* from his proclamation of America entering a "New Frontier", his remarkable Inaugural Address and his "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech of June 1963. At the conclusion of this chapter, Barnes offers the reader some thoughtful ways to create their own vision using the lessons learned from Kennedy's example.

This is an excellent book and is a pleasure to read. John F. Kennedy on Leadership is not a book that simply idolizes the achievements of JFK. Kennedy is honestly examined and all his personal strengths and weaknesses are frankly revealed. The final chapter entitled, *Faults and Failures* strips away the veneer of the Camelot myth. But even here... there is much for the reader to learn from JFK's unpleasant character flaws.

John F. Kennedy on Leadership is a readable book that beautifully merges real historical events with a man whose leadership skills changed the world we live in today. This is the kind of book that provides a satisfying rumination of thought when the back cover is eventually closed.

weLEAD Rating – highly recommended

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