



weLEAD Book Review

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Leaders At All Levels

Deepening Your Talent Pool To Solve the Succession Crisis

Jossey-Bass - 2008 (166 pages paperback)

Author Ram Charan

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Author Ram Charan has become one of the most prolific and highly respected consultants in the world today. He is a pragmatic educator and this book is no exception. Ram is not afraid to challenge the *status quo* and he does so boldly in Leaders At All Levels.

The typical lifespan of CEO's is shorter today than ever before. Obviously, when a CEO departs an organization, his or her role must be filled. Many feel we are in the midst of a crisis. As Charan remarks, "At all levels, companies are short on the quantity and quality of leaders they need." But where do these leaders come from and how well were they *prepared* to assume the role of a CEO?

The traditional business model attempts to develop future leaders as a responsibility of Human Resources by providing classroom training, spending large amounts of money on training, developing a universal set of competencies and putting everyone on a standardized career track as openings become available. In place of this outdated ineffective model, Charan offers the *Apprenticeship Model*. This is a new approach to the entire leadership development process.

The eight chapters that comprise Leaders At All Levels discuss the introduction and application of the Apprenticeship Model. It is a philosophy where all top level executives, supervisors and virtually everyone takes responsibility for developing leaders within the organization. With this model Human Resources becomes the *trustee* of a process that is now a companywide priority. This also means that the present leaders and supervisors take ownership of developing the next CEO succession candidates. The result is that succession development becomes part of the everyday fabric of the organization and nurtures feedback, practice, course corrections and even more feedback.

Leaders At All Levels is a beneficial book that breaks down Charan's Apprenticeship Model into an effective teaching tool to create change in how leadership development is performed. Like any tool the challenge is in implementing new ideas that go against a prevailing culture. This book also provides some helpful charts and stimulating questions to promote deeper thinking. The *epilogue* is especially interesting. Charan talks directly to any reader who believes they have leadership potential. After encouraging the reader to adopt the Apprenticeship Model even if their organization doesn't, he stresses the importance of taking charge of your own development and learning. In addition, the author provides coaching advice on how to guide your own career progression including possible pitfalls. It is for these reasons that Leaders At All Levels is a valuable book that hopefully will give birth to a new and better way for organizations to develop leaders.

weLEAD Rating – highly recommended

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