

July 3, 2001

## Reviews

# Leadership@Work

## How to be an effective team leader anywhere, anytime, with anyone

By Harvey Silver, Ph.D. &  
Bart Mindszenty, APR, Fellow CPRS

ISBN 0-9688148-0-8  
2001, Lifeworks Books



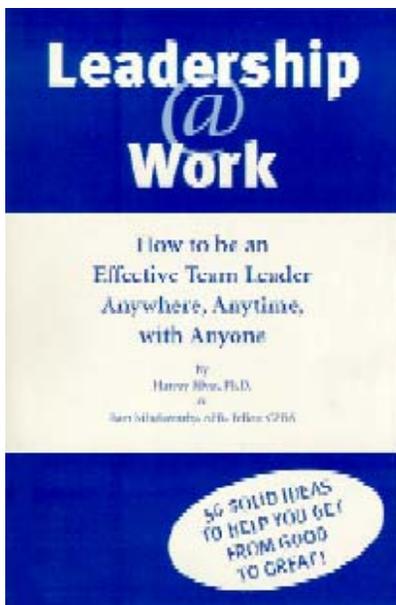
Kathee Muzin

*"It takes patience, tenacity, courage and persistence to change even some of your behavior. To influence the behavior of others is even more demanding."*

Leadership@Work

If you're in summer slack-off mode, you might want to skip this one - it calls for serious effort. On the other hand, if you're dedicated to becoming the best manager you can be - someone who can think, make effective decisions, and lead successfully in the workplace - you won't want to miss this little gem.

The brainchild of organizational psychologist Harvey Silver and communications counselor Bart Mindszenty, **Leadership@Work** is short, sweet and "cuts to the chase."



**Leadership@Work** contains 56 itty, bitty two-page chapters of ....damned hard work. Each one begins with a meaty thought, like: The manager who can understand the 'why' can tolerate and perform almost any 'how'.

A few meaningful paragraphs expand on what the "thought" implies for "real life." Then you get to roll up your sleeves and sweat through a half dozen questions about how the thought applies to you ...and (here's the kicker) what you're going to do about it.

It's not that they're difficult questions. But the rubber hits the road somewhere between question four (some version of "what do I need to do about this?") and the last question,

which often demands a commitment: "what **will** I do about this?" Emphasis added - by your conscience! (Hmm- did I say one of the authors is a psychologist?)

Fans of the **Life 101** series (by Peter McWilliams), will find the format vaguely familiar. **7 Habit**\*-ites will appreciate the straightforward tone and emphasis on personal accountability. The words are few, but carefully chosen for high impact. A few of my favourite quotes are:

"...if you don't accept responsibility for your error, (but) try to blame others, fail to fix things and (don't) learn from it, then it's no longer an error. It's a mistake."

"Managers who say..."it's lonely at the top" are suffering from the result of having put themselves on a pedestal..."

"Perfectionism causes constipation"

The meat of **Leadership@Work** is spread over two sections, "Leading Myself" and "Leading My Team", with a probing self-assessment quiz in between.

At 30 chapters, "Leading Myself" is the longer section. Chapters such as "Exercise your mind", "Happiness and misery are mostly a matter of choice", "Losers look for a common enemy, winners look for a common goal", and "You've got to pass 'hard' to get to 'easy'" address basic skills and concepts (like keeping your expression pleasant) build confidence and awareness and nudge us a little beyond our comfort zones.

The middle section, "Time Out: The Personal Self-Assessment", prods us to examine our strengths and weaknesses and our attitudes about self-change them. As the authors promise, "You can't fail this self-assessment. You can only learn more about yourself."

In the final section, "Leading My Team", the focus is on becoming a more effective manager. Twenty chapters cover topics like developing staff, building teams, creating motivation, setting standards and guiding behaviour.

Some chapter headings:

"Push a car, pull a person",

"You can't ever teach someone to be responsible by taking responsibility away",

"Standards can be set by default"

"We become what we learn!"

**Leadership@Work** is a godsend for everyone who "doesn't have the time or patience to...wade through hundreds of pages to get the information you need". It's simple and powerful, without being skimpy.

But achieving that brevity has meant "sacrificing" any visible theoretical framework. If you, like me, are cursed with a mind that wants to know "why" as well as "what" and "how", you'll find the occasional flat statement of fact a bit grating. For example:

Of every 100 tasks a person does at work, about 80% support objectives, and about 20% need some changing and improvement.

To be fair, **Leadership@Work** was intended to strip away the "hundreds of pages" of self-help and management tomes that aren't essential for getting results. But the absence of background information, foot/end notes or even a "further reading" list is a little disappointing. Admittedly, a minor quibble.

With its straightforward, easy-to-read style, **Leadership@Work** would make a perfect "Happy Promotion" gift to a first-time manager or supervisor, or business school grad. It would also be a valuable handbook for mentors - to use or give to their mentees.

More experienced leaders and managers will find valuable benchmarks to measure their skills against in **Leadership@Work**. This book would be a great tool for helping dysfunctional managers become effective and valued leaders. And its discrete chunks of subject matter would make **Leadership@Work** be an ideal workbook for a weekly group or a workshop.

Whoever you are, I guarantee you'll get something out of this book. No, on second thought, I guarantee this book will get something out of you!

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(I.e. practitioners of **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**, by Stephen Covey)

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**K**athee Muzin is the Publisher and founder of **PR Canada**.