3D TEAM LEADERSHIP: A NEW APPROACH FOR COMPLEX TEAMS

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As anyone who is interested in teams and teamwork knows, there are a plethora of new books on this topic on the market at any single point in time. The typical offerings on teams, however, inevitably seem to espouse outdated and timeworn principles with content and examples that are trite, predictable, and derivative. Many of these works on teams are based entirely on anecdotal evidence with questionable rationales rather than on rigorous research and theory. Contrary to this trend, 3D Team Leadership represents a novel, current, and well-researched approach to the complex challenges of team leadership, which provides accessible, practical examples and descriptions of teams in real-world organizations. This book represents an important advance in team research and should be on the reading lists of all leaders, HR professionals, academics, and researchers who lead, support, or study teams in organizations.

3D Team Leadership prescribes a new, thought-provoking model of team leadership that leaders can employ to create, manage, and maintain high-performing teams. Books on teamwork have customarily considered teams to be groups of employees working interdependently and have ignored both individual differences among team members and the subgroups that inevitably form within teams. The framework presented by Kirkman (a professor of leader-ship in the college of management at North Carolina State University) and Harris (an assistant professor of business at Texas Christian University) focuses on three key dimensions of team leadership (the "3D" of team leadership): the team as a whole, the team as individuals, and the team as consisting of smaller units (subteams). Based on their own and oth-ers' research and consulting, Kirkman and Harris provide practical guidance and straightforward advice for managing complex teams in today's business environment, including suggestions on how leaders can evaluate the current level of effectiveness of their own teams.

The authors believe that high-performing teams in organizations are instrumental for innovative thinking, better client service, and higher quality products. On one hand, leaders often reward and evaluate only individual perfor-mance rather than the performance of the team as a whole. On the other hand, leaders sometimes focus on the team as a whole at the expense of individual members. Additionally, leaders may fail to address intrateam conflict, which may lead to the formation of counterproductive subteams.

Kirkman and Harris provide an in-depth discussion of three fundamental mistakes that limit a team's effectiveness. The first mistake occurs when leaders expect team members to forego their own objectives and interests for the benefit of the team. This is not a prudent approach for leading teams in organizations—individuals are often members of more than one team and sometimes face conflicting objectives and rewards from the various teams.

The second mistake organizations often make is creating a number of temporary, ad hoc teams that create a lot of enthusiasm and expectations, only to slowly fade away without making any significant contribution to the organization. We all know of examples where a new team is introduced to the organization with a lot of fanfare, usually to solve some problem, only to be never heard from again.

The third and final mistake according to Kirkman and Harris is the failure to recognize the effects of subteams on the effective functioning of the full team. Such subteams may evolve into cliques that have a negative impact on the overall performance of the team. This occurs when leaders ignore unhealthy interpersonal relationships among team members and factions form with conflicting or competing objectives.

According to Kirkman and Harris, leaders should concentrate on all three of the above issues to ensure that their teams will function effectively. However, to be successful, the approach to these three dimensions of team leadership must be carried out at the right time and in the right situation. The authors spend a lot of time addressing the correct approach and timing in their book. Additionally, Kirkman and Harris stress that shared leadership is an important con-cept in maintaining team effectiveness. The notion that team leadership is always vested in a single person is a flawed notion of how teams function. The authors define shared team leadership as occurring when various team members assume leadership roles at different times during the team's existence.

The organization of the book provides a convenient roadmap for navigating 3D team leadership. It is divided into 10 chapters including an introductory chapter on 3D team leadership, a chapter on leading teams, separate chapters on each of the three dimensions of teams (the team as a whole, the team as individuals, and subteams), a chapter on when to focus on what with the team, and chapters on working with teams in across cultures, virtual teams, and the requirements of 3D team leadership. The final chapter focuses on assessing one's team leadership skills.

The primary audience for this book is those leaders who are responsible for setting up and managing teams in orga-nizations. Additionally, HR practitioners who are responsible for supporting the creation and management of teams will find this book extremely valuable. Also, academics are likely to use several chapters (and perhaps the entire book) in graduate courses in industrial and organizational (I-O) psychology, management, organizational behavior (OB), orga-nizational development (OD), and human resource management (HRM).

The lively and witty writing style of the authors will hold the reader's attention—the book is written in a conversa-tional tone that makes for stimulating reading. Although practitioners and students will appreciate the accessibility of the book, academics and researchers will value its connections to relevant and rigorous research and theory on team leadership. Kirkman and Harris make a passionate and convincing argument that their 3D model can be an invaluable tool for understanding and leading teams in organizations. The authors bring their arguments to life through the use of engaging, practical examples and anecdotes of teamwork in real-world organizations.

The only criticism I have of the book is the extensive use of footnotes, which are organized by chapter at the end of the book. As one who likes to refer to the research cited in a text, I find searching for a reference in a long list of footnotes to be a very annoying experience. It seems that in-text citations are a much more user-friendly approach to references. The advantage of this method is that readers familiar with the literature may recognize many of the citations and not have to look them up in the reference list.

In summary, this book provides an excellent introduction to and in-depth coverage of the 3D model of team leader-ship. It is recommended without reservation as a primary resource for leaders and other practitioners in organizations, and as a supplementary text for researchers, academics, and graduate students in disciplines such as I-O psychology, OB, OD, and HRM.

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