

Warren Bennis

A WARREN BENNIS BOOK

This collection of books is devoted exclusively to new and exemplary contributions to management thought and practice. The books in this series are addressed to thoughtful leaders, executives, and managers of all organizations who are struggling with and committed to responsible change. My hope and goal is to spark new intellectual capital by sharing ideas positioned at an angle to conventional thought—in short, to publish books that disturb the present in the service of a better future.

Editor's Note

It seems all too rare these days to encounter a leader who is able to fulfill his or her role in the truest sense of the word—to be both “tough-minded and tender-hearted” as Doug Conant and Mette Norgaard describe in this extraordinary book. And yet I know they are out there—and what is more, there are many, many others who, if they had the example, the inspiration, and the instruction, could master a leadership approach that is at once flexible, easy to understand, and, most important, effective.

Doug Conant, a “leader of leaders,” is the CEO of the Campbell Soup Company—a universally known brand that has encountered the same challenges of any large company of late; Mette Norgaard, a “teacher of leaders,” has been instrumental working with Doug and the larger leadership group at Campbell and in her own consulting beyond. They have come together to produce a book that

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unpacks the very essence of what a true leader does day in and day out: with intention, he or she moves things forward in a series of interactions that are made up of moments. This notion is at once simple and profound, for when you think about how many instances are available to one who is willing to pay attention, who is willing to become self-aware, who is willing to simply say, “How can I help?” you realize the enormity of the opportunity—as well as the enormity of the effort. For though it may be “simple,” it is not easy. It requires a deep sense of humanity; of doing what it is right; of commitment; of daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly *practice*. What I love about the authors’ TouchPoints approach is that it makes clear sense, and it is proven! It points out that there are spaces in between where something is and what something might become—and that these moments are ours to seize. If we lead with this notion in mind, we have broken leadership down to its essence.

How to go about it effectively is the next obvious question—and here the authors can expertly guide you. Doug’s own experiences over the past ten years at Campbell are a virtual laboratory of how the TouchPoints approach, bit by bit, has made a clear impact. His stories here are priceless. Mette’s work with leaders of all stripes is also here, and shows us how various people in different professions around the world have successfully put the approach to use.

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As someone who continues to think about, write about, and learn about leadership, I was moved by this book. It reminds us that “leadership is not about *you*—it is about *them*,” and that leadership is both incredibly soft and unceasingly hard. Ultimately, it helps us understand how to open up the space that is needed to really advance issues. Yes, it is incredible work we commit to—to do it well and to do it to the best of our ability is likely the most challenging effort we can undertake. And the genius is that we will always have another opportunity to grow it and learn it, if we commit to it. Remember, these authors say, if you forget where to start, you can simply ask “How can I help?”

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