
EVANS, G. Edward and WARD, Patricia Layzell. *Leadership basics for librarians and information professionals*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press. 2007. 246 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-8108-5229-7 £27.99.

Leadership is an issue of concern to members of all types of organisations but in this book's preface the authors identify some reasons why it is of particular concern to Information and Library Services (ILSs). While most of these are not new (like a great deal in this book as it transpired) the authors do identify one factor that really hits home. The number of senior positions currently changing hands represents a serious challenge for ILSs of all sorts and obligates library and information professionals to address the issues this raises. Aware of the number of senior positions currently, or soon to be, available my appetite was whetted by the early identification in this book of the challenge this presents to ILSs. The declaration that the focus will be on the community served was also very welcome. This sense of expectation was heightened by the fact that the authors had not only conducted a significant literature review but they had also undertaken a survey of ILS leaders during their preparation. However, as the book progresses the authors break one of the very rules they cite. Leaders are advised by the authors to under promise and over deliver. Unfortunately, this book promises much, and while it is useful in many respects, on the whole it under delivers.

Aimed at all levels of leaders in all kinds of ILSs, the book consists of nine chapters divided into three parts. Part one addresses the background to leadership. Key concepts discussed include the routes to, and challenges of, leadership. These chapters include an insightful discussion about the differences between leadership and management. Chapter three describes how information professionals can develop skills and abilities, and reassures us that we all have the potential to become leaders. All of this is solid stuff but there is nothing new or inspiring to be found in the opening section.

Part two, the most valuable, deals with the development of leadership skills. The upfront manner in which potentially difficult subjects are confronted e.g. office politics is refreshing. Chapter seven, about E-Leadership, is very helpful. The authors discuss the paradoxes and challenges that the increased importance of e-leadership raises. Trust, always a vital part of effective leadership, is more important than ever. Staff too have a greater role to play as leadership roles and responsibilities are increasingly devolved and dependent on participation. Information professionals will recognise many of the issues raised in this chapter in their own services. However, even in this section, some of the chapters fall short. In chapter four, for example, in which the creation of high performing teams is addressed, the quality of the content is variable. A practical discussion about the difference between top management teams and other teams is confined to little more than a page but raises some enormous points for consideration. Another key area that is not satisfactorily explored is the difficult early days experienced by most teams. This is particularly important for a new leader who may wonder what s/he has let themselves in for! This concept could have been clearly explained in many ways e.g. Tuckman's Forming, Storming, Norming and

Performing model, but instead the authors address it in what I found to be a roundabout manner. There are many references for further reading, an issue which I discuss below, but the content itself could have been more helpful.

Part three contains the final two chapters. Chapter eight draws upon the aforementioned survey and identifies 22 banana skins of which prospective leaders should be aware. Although interesting, one possible impact of such a lengthy list could be to discourage new or potential leaders. Certainly if the 22 bananas skins were not sufficiently intimidating then the 23 crucial success factors included in Chapter nine just might be. A major concern about both these chapters is that they are based on the survey of ILS leaders. While the inclusion of primary research must be regarded as positive, there is no example given of the questionnaire used or of the interview topics covered. Furthermore, there is no link to any online source for this information. A basic measure of the worth of any set of survey results is the tool used to extract them and this absence is significant.

There are other disappointing aspects of this book. The style and language is very much US-based. While this is to be expected to some extent given the authors' background, the repeated use of phrases such as 'at least in the United States' and references to federal systems seems to ignore the impact of globalisation that the author's themselves address in Chapter two. A huge irritant is the over use of text boxes with headings such as Try This, Check This Out, The Expert and Tip. In the 27 pages of Chapter one alone there are 21 such boxes! Like any device, its overuse leads to a reduction in its impact and constitutes a real risk of information overload. Finally, there are some annoying inconsistencies in the layout of chapters. For example, the first seven chapters all include useful summaries, clearly labelled as such. In the last two these are entitled "final thoughts" and "summing up". While a small point in itself, this is indicative of a more persistent sense that better editing could have made more of the volume of material contained in this book. While this book could be of interest to new leaders to consult as required, I believe that overall it does not realise its potential.

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