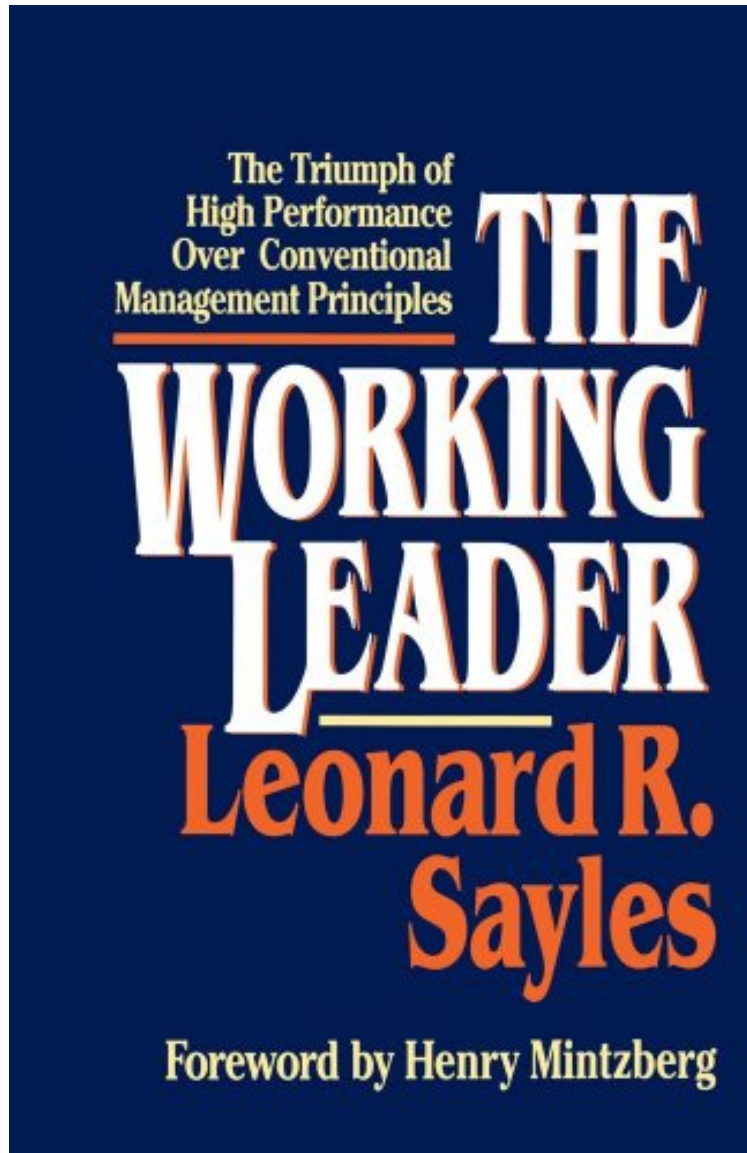


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## The Working Leader: The Triumph of High Performance Over Conventional Management Principles

*Leonard R. Sayles*

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**Leonard R. Sayles : The Working Leader: The Triumph of High Performance Over Conventional Management Principles** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Working Leader: The Triumph of High Performance Over Conventional Management Principles:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Disappointing, pass on this oneBy HighlyDiscerning"The Working

Leader" by Leonard R. Sayles is a rather dot-disconnected, annoyingly repetitive, rambling conglomeration of compound complex sentences that obfuscate the fact that the Author fails to offer anything new in the art of leadership. With the chapter conclusions being just as intellectually murky as the rest of the text. Though his first works in 1964 and 1966 offered somewhat better insight, the student of leadership will rarely, if ever, find Sayles (author of over 12 books) quoted in contemporary texts. "The Working Leader" itself is primarily a regurgitation or rehashing of conventional leadership wisdom seeking to find some new take on old ideas, but which hardly justifies the time it takes to read it. As such elementary supervisory pabulum as, "...the leadership challenge for contemporary managers, to make things work and work well" (page 230), offers very little in the way of expanding one's leadership wisdom. It is clearly evident that the Author has no practical supervisory experience, and that he has the same trouble as other academicians in simply analyzing the observed behavior of successful leaders and then trying to distill some unique, meaningful essence. The author also makes many questionable assumptions regarding supervisory practices and management theory and then attempts to provide the reader with answers. Much like a reporter searching for a Pulitzer Prize winning scoop, after having spent so much time studying the subject he or she hopes to discover something important enough to expound upon. In many cases little or no effort is made to clarify the author's general pronouncements so as to give the prose befuddled reader a fighting chance at figuring out what the author is trying to say. It is unclear who the author is trying to reach or to what general purpose he is directed, as the he certainly doesn't speak the language of the average chain-of-command practitioner. There are also an abnormal number of typographical errors. On the brighter side, the cloth binding is excellent and at 249 pages it is mercifully short. 0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Recognition is Long Overdo By The Inquirer This quite simply is one of the most important epositions of the actual practice of effective leaders as opposed to flavor of the month approaches of the best sellers on. Sayles is an organizational sociologist who has studied what effective leaders actually do. Read, savour, and learn. If you are a manager combine this with Beyond the Hype to undertand in depth what is required of a manager.

The goal: To be a leader who has an agenda, knows the system inside out, is comfortable with fluidity, and recognizes that the parts do not always fit into an integrated whole. Schooled to oversee fixed, almost unvarying routines, managers today are unprepared to manage the conflicts in modern work flow relationships. Sayles shows with vivid case studies how middle managers with an in-depth understanding of the organization can resolve the inherent contradictions and ambiguities among design, sales, and manufacturing.

Louis P. Mattis Chairman and CEO, Sterling Winthrop Inc. A must read for executives who seek a deeper understanding of how and where the work in their organizations really gets done. A substantial new contribution to the study and practice of leadership. About the Author Leonard R. Sayler Leonard R. Sayler is Senior Research Scientist at the Corder for Creative Leadership and Professor Emeritus, Graduate School of Business at Columbia University. His consulting has focused largely on leadership in technology implementation, and his many books are translated into eight languages. He is a Fellow of the American Anthropological Association. Henry Mintzberg Henry Mintzberg is the author of several seminal books, including The Nature of Managerial Work, The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning, and Managers Not MBAs. He is Cleghorn Professor of Management Studies at McGill University. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1 Waltz Faster -- They're Playing a Tango The culture of the United States can produce strong individuals -- eager to challenge conventional wisdom, flexible, and improvisational. Americans learn very early to talk up and talk back, to take initiative, and to try new things (often to the consternation of those around them). Increasingly, business requires managers who can solve the intractable problems created by the pace of change. As we seek to catch up and surpass Japanese and European competition, it would be a serious mistake to seek to mimic group- or clan-based work cultures. For one thing, it wouldn't work for us. More importantly, we would be ignoring one of our great strengths: these strong individuals. This book demonstrates how many of the most pressing challenges of modern business require not more Japanese management (or other quick grafts) but the fostering of a more vigorous, individual-based leadership style. It is leadership focused on work issues, not just people issues, and it is very different from the method and style of managing that have evolved from our traditional management principles. WHY IS LEADERSHIP BEING REDISCOVERED? Anthropologists assess the anxieties and passions of a society by interpreting its myths, wise sayings, and folk wisdom. The same process can help uncover some of the hidden dynamics of the world of the manager. Why are so many companies now seeking more leadership and more teamwork? In the last half-dozen years, the subject of leadership has been rediscovered by business as a critical factor in organizational performance. Books and courses proliferate as companies recognize that there is much more to gaining commitment and performance than investing in automation and robots or in better compensation plans (although the quest for the right "magic bullet" still continues). At the same time, the subject of teamwork has assumed growing importance in the perspective of operating managers. Improving the cooperation that takes place among interdependent managers, professionals, and employees is the primary focus of a great deal of management training. Underlying this rediscovered significance of leadership and

teamwork is a gnawing sense among American business managers that they have been doing something wrong. The self-assurance of the post-World War II era that American business knew the answers has been replaced by the growing perception that they probably don't, and that Japanese and European managers may do many things better than U.S. managers do. For the most part, though, the teamwork and leadership issues are jumbled and tangled in webs of ever-changing jargon, or one or another kind of improvement program. They have appealing names -- total quality management (TQM), time-based management, high-performance work systems, to mention just a few. The development of attractively titled new approaches to management is indeed a growth industry all of its own. Little attention, however, is paid to the underlying worldview of managers; therefore, basic management actions and reactions tend to remain fixed. No one can claim to look inside the heads of managers. Even so, there is a great deal of external evidence in how they talk and behave that many managers have a view of their jobs and their organizations that doesn't check out with reality but is, instead, a throwback to dated management principles and models. Scientific management still represents the core values of most managers. American business is in a time warp; it talks "modern" but acts as though traditional mass-production industry was still the mode. Management theory doesn't copy very well with the reality of today's external business environment, in which volatile markets, fast-paced technological change, and the need for increasing customization are the rule, not the exception. These managers fail to notice that the predictability and controllability of the work itself has changed dramatically in the past decade. What managers do and what professors of management study may not be as relevant as they once were. But since neither look very closely at the challenge involved in getting work accomplished, the mental images they carry around are not challenged. This book, then, is an effort to look more deeply at what I think are basic failures in how American managers manage that are inconsistent with the needs of the real work of modern business. By seeking to explain where those failures came from (ironically, their source lies in efforts to make management more scientific), the case data provide very different management principles than those that have been dominant in U.S. business and business education for almost a century. The case data that will be examined focus on managers who ought to be on the cutting edge of change. It is the middle managers who should have the responsibility for making things happen, for achieving integration and coordination among tasks and functions and overcoming the defects in plans and systems.

**THE HEAVY HAND OF THE PAST** Most of what managers think of as the heart of their jobs has little or nothing to do with these problems, which weren't envisioned by either the fathers (or fathers and mothers) of scientific management or their offspring. They thought more of hierarchies than lateral coordination and integration challenges, hierarchies in which clear and fixed plans would get passed down and results passed up (with certain contingencies to take effect when results were especially good or bad). The result is that American managers for the most part think of their job in hierarchical terms: pleasing the boss and satisfying subordinates. There will of course be occasional work problems requiring involvement, it is assumed, particularly if one is a manufacturing manager (given how equipment and suppliers can misbehave). But most managers believe that involvement with work is a major defect reflecting either unsatisfied needs to give up managing (and go back to being a worker) or a distrust of subordinates. Worse yet, involvement demotivates subordinates. Most managers are never taught, or fail to learn, that the heart of their job as managers is work leadership, facilitating coordination and integration in order to get work done. This neglected but critical responsibility involves change, but a very different kind of change than is envisioned by those who assert that leaders have to be transformational (that is, have a vision of some consequential discontinuity and seek to bring that to fruition).

**THE FUTURE IS NOW** The leadership of the coming decade will diverge from concerns with personality and satisfaction to a focus on work systems and technology. But these concerns do not make relationships and interpersonal effectiveness less relevant. Quite the contrary, continuously improving work effectiveness requires even greater leadership skills than old-fashioned, compartmentalized "people" problems. Almost every modification in technology, no matter how trivial, requires a good deal of information, communication, and persuasion, not to mention persistence and perseverance, all of which derive from leadership capabilities. Organizations will demand much more value added from their managers. The recurring cutting out of managerial levels and slimming down of overhead and staffs are sharp testimony to the increasing recognition that many managers have not been earning their way. What could the managers of a company have been doing when, under market pressures, they can cut almost half their people, square footage, and inventory and still produce the same volume of merchandise? Organizations often become bloated with extra layers of management and accompanying staff when coordination problems fester and managers "run to stand still." To be sure, as the reader will see, the fault is often in the inducements, rigidities, and role models provided by senior management. But that aside, managers will have to be able to demonstrate their ability to create more self-maintaining work systems, instead of constant fire fighting. Ironically, as many cases will illustrate, the need for individual leadership skill increases even though business appears to be dominated by impersonal, technology-based systems. The chapters that follow provide an explanation of why today's managers have to be much more involved in the management of work than Americans have presumed (as well as what form that involvement should take). Otherwise, given a high level of change, uncertainty, and the need for continuous improvements in quality and efficiency, companies become littered with temporary "patches" and new one-shot (but expensive) improvement schemes. Neither the annual plan, the systems, nor the hierarchy work any more to keep everyone and everything in a

"straight line." The reason is not politics or sloth or stupidity; it is because the interrelationships among functions, jobs, and departments are now so complex and dynamic that there can be no real coordination among the parts without continuing, astute managerial inputs. Citicorp's CEO, John Reed, said in 1991 that he expects far fewer meetings and less emphasis on plans, with "judgment replacing a lot of three year plans that no one ever looked at."<sup>2</sup> This is a far cry from what CEOs such as Reed were saying only a year or two earlier. Thus, this is a book about what managers need to do to make organizations stay organized; to make things work. It describes a view of managerial jobs and roles in which effectuating work, handling teams, and work flow relationships are more important than the traditional hierarchical boss-subordinate relations. This is what is both truly important and immensely difficult -- and what American management hasn't known much about doing. For American business effectiveness to improve, managers have to add value. They have to do those things that directly affect productivity. In the past, most companies have been content to have managers contribute indirectly by their planning, standard setting and controls, and motivational skills. This ignores the enormous work leadership needs of modern business. Copyright copy; 1993 by Leonard R. Sayles