

BOOK REVIEW

Collaborative Leadership: building relationships, handling conflict and sharing control

David Archer and Alex Cameron, Routledge, 2013, £29.99



Three Premises on Listening

Part way through the second edition of Archer and Cameron's popular book on collaborative leadership, Mahatma Gandhi's words are quoted: "I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles, but today it means getting along with people." As the authors observe, over half a century on, Gandhi's words are still highly relevant today, yet business leaders still find it difficult to "get along" with people. One wonders whether the global financial crash of 2007 - 2008 would have occurred if those in positions of power had displayed less muscle and more understanding.

This book begins, appropriately, with instances of leadership failure since the first edition was published in 2009: from Gordon Brown's inability to collaborate in government, to Tony Harward's unsuccessful response to the Deepwater Horizon rig explosion, the pitfalls of failing to lead and respond collaboratively are clear. In 2013, interdependence in business has become near-unbiquitous, which has meant that deciding who to collaborate with, and to what extent, is a much more complex process. Through the twelve concise chapters, a very astute demystification of such a complex process is unveiled.

It is made very clear in this book that collaborative leadership requires hard work and dedication. By pointing out the common pitfalls - such as introducing a "one team" ethos or failing to be forensic about potential partnerships - whilst also methodically analysing the steps leaders can take to successfully collaborate, Archer and Cameron craft a very accessible user guide to leading effectively in today's world. The chapters advance many instructive ways for conceptualising and undertaking workplace

collaboration. Part 1 introduces a collaborative leader's toolkit, which contains the types of foundations that should be put in place before collaboration occurs, as well as outlining a roadmap for leaders of partnerships to follow throughout all stages of collaboration. Part 2 then considers collaborative leaders in action - both successful and unsuccessful. A particularly useful chapter on boardroom collaboration leads to reflection that if those in senior roles fail to work in partnership, employees further down the chain will have little incentive or inspiration to push collaboration onto their own agenda.

Underpinned by surveys of business leaders, the authors' own research and case studies, the opportunity for the reader to transfer the wisdom on the page to the real workings of the workplace is made straightforward. Moreover, the admixture of the authors' voices and those of others, including leaders who have achieved real success, produces a book which is itself a product of collaboration and real life experience. Together with the book's uncomplicated language and format, which includes very helpful chapter summaries and frequent, pithy "Lessons for Collaborative Leaders", *Collaborative Leadership* is a highly valuable and practical book for those who wish to develop and reflect on their leadership practices.

GBM