

## Book Review

### **The Art of Supportive Leadership**

(J. Donald Walters, Sterling Publishers Private Limited)

#### **1. General Introduction to the Book**

Name of the Book : The Art of Supportive Leadership  
Author : J. Donald Walters  
Publisher : Sterling Publishers Private Limited  
Year of Publication : 1997  
Edition : 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Pages : 103  
Price : Rs.50 I.C.

#### **2. What is the Book all about?**

Mr. J. Donald Walters' The Art of Supportive Leadership is a practical guidebook for the people of intellectual circles, especially of responsibility of administration and management. It offers a new approach to leadership in accomplishing any task in a shared way. It focuses more on practical experience rather than on bookish knowledge. The main thrust of the book is on the support and coordination by the leader/manager to his/her subordinates. Supportive leadership leads people; it doesn't drive them. It involves them; it doesn't coerce them. For the accomplishment of any task, the leader should be visionary, considerate, supportive, kind and loyal to his subordinates. The true leader feels himself at one with his men, not superior to them.

#### **3. Segments of the Book and Summary of Each Segment**

The book has been segmented into twelve chapters. They are summarized in the following lines:

##### **Chapter 1: The Art of Leadership**

In the first chapter the author tries to shed light on the art and tactics of genuine leadership. Supportive leadership always keeps people before things.

##### **Chapter 2: Leadership is not an Ego Game**

We can find some very interesting issues concerning good and bad leadership in this chapter. A good leader is never boastful and egoist rather he inspires

his subordinates showing his/her ability through shared and common endeavor.

**Chapter 3: Leadership Means Responsibility**

The third chapter focuses on another feature of leadership that a leader should be ready to own credit and discredit of his/her team equally. Leadership shouldn't be understood in terms of glamour, but of responsibility.

**Chapter 4: Leadership Means Setting Aside Personal Desires**

This chapter discusses feature of leadership, viz. impersonation. A true leader puts his personal desires and wishes last, not first.

**Chapter 5: Leadership Means Service**

This chapter describes the concept of scientific management and effective service delivery. Job is more important than the position and leadership means giving service, not receiving it.

**Chapter 6: Leadership Means Loyalty**

This chapter deals with the tactics of taking the subordinates into confidence. We should work with them as they are, not as we would like them to be. In order to win loyalty from subordinates, we should be loyal to them. To win love, first we should give love ourselves.

**Chapter 7: Leadership is Intuition Guided by Common Sense**

A wise leader convinces by sound reason, or by the magnetism of his own conviction, and not by the mere outward authority of his/her position or past experience.

**Chapter 8: The Importance of Flexibility**

We should be ready to admit our mistakes. We should be open to other's points of view; they might prove better than our own. Rigidity is often unproductive.

**Chapter 9: The Need for Action, Not Talk**

Action is always ahead of ideas and plans. Making too many plans without their effective implementation is meaningless. So, they (action and ideas) should go hand in hand.

**Chapter 10: Giving Support**

The leader/manager should try to strengthen his/her subordinates in their work, in their creativity, and in their qualities of leadership. We have to invite their support; we shouldn't commandeer it.

**Chapter 11: Work with People's Strength**

Collective effort is more effective and productive than an individual's effort. The real doers under us should be encouraged, not the mere talkers.

**Chapter 12: What is True Success?**

This chapter can be understood as the summation of all the preceding chapters. A true leader is neither attached to success nor afraid of failure. That is why failure sometimes can be thought of as a pillar of success.

**4. Objective Interpretation of the Subject-Areas Covered**

The twelve chapters of this book seem to be 'unity in diversity'. All these chapters can be understood as different qualities of a good leader. For the very simple matter of 'leadership' the author has tried his best to unveil the secrets of true leadership. The leader/manager is always on the top of any organization. If he can feel the pulse of his subordinates and if he can take his work force into his confidence and make them loyal, he can be successful in his vision, mission and goal. His vision and goal shouldn't be merely personal rather they should be organizational, shared and common. That is why this book can be an elixir of knowledge for the people of all levels of responsibility.

**5. Some Interesting Issues and Revelations**

J. Donald Walters has presented various interesting issues and revelations in this handbook. Some of the noteworthy ones are as follows:

- If a leader glorifies in the importance of his position, he will infect his subordinates with the same attitude (Page 22).
- A true leader is as ready to accept responsibility for failure as for success (Page 35).
- Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian freedom fighter always preferred 3<sup>rd</sup> class carriages because there was no 4<sup>th</sup> class (Page 46).
- To win love, first give love yourself (Page 57).

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- Fools suffer, but do they learn from their suffering? A donkey repeats the same mistake, no matter how many times his master beats him (Page 66).
- A chain is only as strong as its weakest link (Page 91).
- Darkness can't be banished by beating with a stick. The only weapon is the light (Page 92).

### **6. Usefulness of the Book and Its Message to the Readers**

This book is very useful for people of all walks of life in the positions of responsibility. It is very light, portable and easy to understand. It heralds a message that leadership is not a matter of glamour, it is a matter of action and performance in an effective, productive and supportive way. It should be used as a handbook in every activity and decision making process of a leader/manager.

### **7. Concluding Remarks**

Leader, in this book, is presented not as a driver and commander but as a guide, facilitator and supporter of the subordinates. His major responsibility is not to dictate and coerce them, but to be with them, encourage them and become a part of them. If the leader is cooperative, supportive, considerate and motivating, the organizational goals can be accomplished in a desired way. Art and tactics are not to be confused with position and self-importance in a leader is self-defeating. Humility is self-honesty, truthfulness, and strength.

The book has some printing errors, repetition of same ideas in the succeeding chapters, and some gender biases (only he, his, etc. are used) Except these weaknesses the book can prove to be a milestone in the field of management and administration.

- Kul Bahadur G.C.