

CONNECTIVE LEADERSHIP: MANAGING IN A CHANGING WORLD BY JEAN LIPMAN- BLUMEN

“Quite simply, a masterpiece” —Warren Bennis



Managing in a Changing World

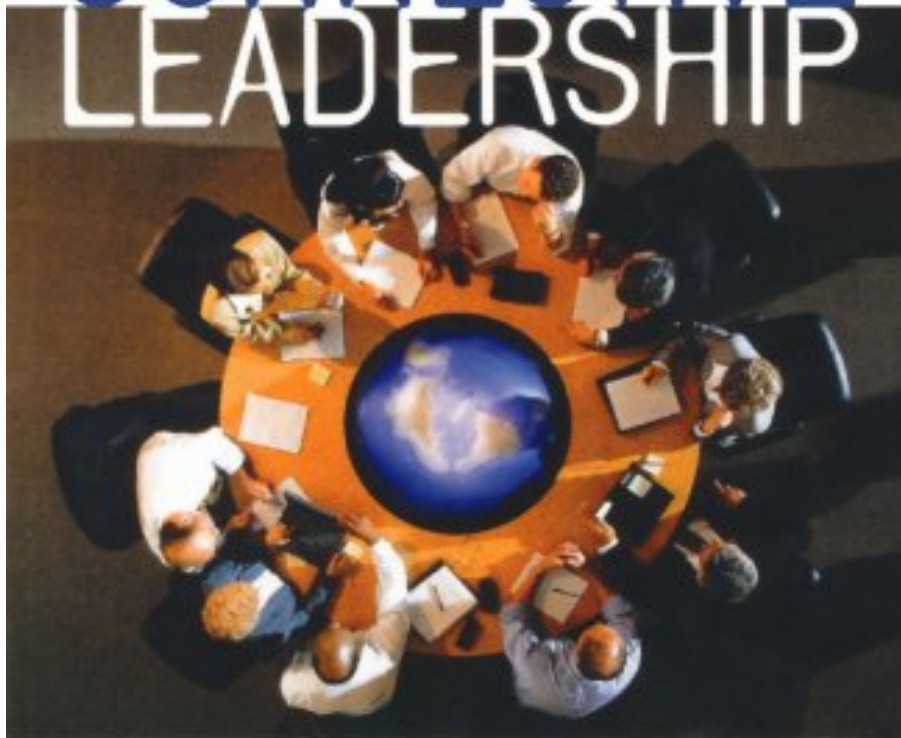
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Review

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Business today is framed by two global tensions. On the one hand, the age of the Internet has ushered in an unprecedented interdependence. People from far-flung reaches of the globe now find themselves in close contact, and collaboration is the order of the day. On the other hand, we still live in an autonomous world of diverse nations and unique individuals, and the businesses and organizations that we have created to represent us are equally unique. In this conflicting environment, a special approach to leadership is called for, one that tames these two forces and integrates them in a political but ethical way. The Connective Leadership model defines that approach, emphasizing various modes of working with and through other people instead of bowing to authoritarianism. This includes creating short-term coalitions instead of long-term alliances and forming ennobling enterprises to which people want to commit themselves. Based on extensive research analyzing the leadership styles of more than 5,000 leaders and managers world-wide, Lipman-Blumen has developed an innovative strategy that demonstrates how to move beyond competition towards an "ethical instrumentalism" that employs the talents of others to achieve strategic goals. Thoroughly researched and accessibly written, this book--originally published under the title *The Connective Edge*--provides the skills and information needed to move organizations, nations, and people into the emerging era with stellar results.

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Fast delivery. Book was interesting and insightful.

By Rosalinda

Fast delivery. Book was interesting and insightful.

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

A Powerful New Model of Leadership

By Robert Kramer, Assistant Prof., American University (kramer_b@bls.gov)

Truly magnificent! For years, as an academic and an organizational consultant, I've looked for a leadership book that connects me to the most serious issues of human life and organization. At last I've found it. Move over John Kotter, Warren Bennis, and John Gardner. A powerful new voice has entered the debate on what constitutes a leader, a voice that will have to be reckoned with by all future writers on leadership. A voice of passion, integrity and courage.

Unlike any other leader, Jean Blumen-Lipman's "connective leader" can help us creatively integrate the dialectics of individuation and relationship, diversity and interdependence, self and other, I and Thou, the individual and the organization, the nation-state and the global community, without sacrificing either pole, in

a whipsaw of opposites, to the demands of the other. No small feat!

Reaching out dramatically to friends and foes alike, "connective leaders go around intellectual defenses to reach directly into the emotional solar plexus," says Lipman-Blumen. Such persons "use" themselves and everyone else as "instruments" or servants to accomplish their cause, practicing a service-oriented instrumentalism, an ethical Machiavellianism, whose purpose is not to advance the leader's power or glory but to allow us to reach beyond our narrow self interest, our self-imposed boundaries, to serve a larger whole.

If leaders try to use the same one-dimensional behaviors that they've used in the past - authoritarian, charismatic, ego-driven or even naively collaborative - they are going to fail. "Connective leadership" involves a paradoxical way of being, neither authoritarian nor simply participatory, neither command-and-control nor anarchic, neither arbitrary nor self-sacrificial.

The "connective leader" lives and models, as a way of being, maximum individuality within maximum community. This requires an exquisite balancing act, and presupposes that leaders, in businesses, local communities, national politics or international relations, have the emotional intelligence to accept the compatibility of what are usually seen as irreconcilable or contradictory needs.

There are deep existential reasons, says Lipman-Blumen, who was strongly influenced by Ernest Becker's writings on the denial of death, why "connective leaders" may be more effective in coming generations. For leadership in an era when physical and geopolitical boundaries are dissolving, when century-old ideologies are dying, the false dichotomy between interdependence and diversity, union and separation, likeness and difference, ally and competitor, friend and enemy, must be transcended. This, above all, is the role of the "connective leader."

This is a splendid book for university courses on management or leadership. If you do not read Lipman-Blumen, I'm afraid that you may never truly understand the future of leadership.

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

Wisdom, Eloquence, and Circumspection

By Robert Morris

As those who have read *Hot Groups* already know, Lipman-Blumen is one of the most innovative thinkers now commenting on the contemporary business world. With this book, she makes a substantial and truly significant contribution to our understanding of several separate but interdependent issues: leadership, connectivity, human development, intellectual capital, strategic alliances (both internal and external), and organizational transformation. Yes, yes, I know. There are hundreds of other books already published which discuss several of the same subjects and many of them are first-rate, as Lipman-Blumen would be the first to acknowledge. All of them are listed in her superb "References" section and key ideas from several are woven into her crisp narrative. One of the several reasons why this book is different is the provision and explanation of what she calls "The Connective Leadership Model" which is the focus of Part II. Typical of Lipman-Blumen, she does not suggest that hers is the only model to consider; in fact, she strongly urges her reader to correlate her or his organizations needs and interests with the structure of the model, selecting whatever is most important. However, I presume to offer a caveat: Although by now an overworked buzz word, "integration" of any combination of components is absolutely essential. Whatever the model, its components must be cohesive, comprehensive, and cost-effective as are those which comprise "The Connective Leadership Model."

Wisely, following a precise and eloquent Preface, Lipman-Blumen focuses in Part One on "The Changing Dynamics of Leadership" which, inevitably, have changed at least to some extent since she wrote this book, first published in 1996. Nonetheless, her rationale remains rock-solid. Then and now, organizations need (and will continue to need) leadership which is "more politically savvy and instrumental, yet more ethical, authentic, accountable, and particularly, more ennobling." She calls this new approach "connective leadership" and suggests that it can "potentially transform the destructive tensions of diversity and interdependence into constructive leadership action." I hasten to add that, in most organizations where

leaders tend to be identified by title, political and economic leverage, degree of authority, the "connective leadership" to which she refers can -- and should -- include everyone involved in a given organization. Stated another way, what she seems to be advocating is what I call "collaborative initiative" which can (and should) function at all levels. Those organizations which achieve and then sustain such initiatives (e.g. Southwest Airlines) have a "connective edge" over their competition. Lipman- Blumen provides an excellent discussion of this point in Chapter 10 and Noel Tichy also has much of value to say about this in his own book, *The Leadership Engine*.

Lipman-Blumen organizes her material within three Parts: *The Changing Dynamics of Leadership* (a review and examination of "the origins and evolution of the human need for leadership"), *The Connective Leadership Model* (more about that in a moment), and *Bridging to the Stage 3 World* (an exploration of the "empirical organizational results and the philosophical implications of the Connective Leadership Model"). The nature of leadership which she advocates is "both provocative and savvy, yet pragmatic and honorable." I wish it were possible to reproduce in this brief commentary the model she presents in Part Two. Essentially, it consists of three separate but interdependent components:

DIRECT : The intrinsic, competitive, and power styles of leadership

RELATIONAL: The collaborative, contributory, and vicarious styles of leadership

INSTRUMENTAL: The personal, social, and entrusting styles of leadership

Lipman-Blumen correctly points out that the most effective leaders are those who possess an appropriate combination of all three. As I read Part Two, I thought about the striking differences between the leadership styles of Gandhi and Patton. Relying entirely on active (not passive) strategies and tactics of non-violence, Gandhi helped India to achieve independence. Patton was required to use entirely different strategies and tactics to rescue the American troops at Bastogne. For me, one of this book's most insightful chapters is Chapter 11, "Women Leaders: An Oxymoron? Or Does Gender Make a Difference?" Lipman-Blumen poses and then addresses a number of gender-specific issues. Once again, as I read this chapter, I thought about leaders such as Joan of Arc, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Elizabeth I, and Catherine the Great...each of whom possessed a combination of direct, relational, and instrumental leadership styles in appropriate balance. That was their "connective edge."

Within the context of explaining the need for what she calls "connective" leadership, Lipman-Blumen examines the theme of the contradictory pulls of two global tensions, interdependence and diversity. The former demands collaboration and mutuality while often seeming to threaten the independence and individualism required by the latter. "Connective" leadership is needed to integrate or at least coordinate these two sometimes adversarial forces. The leader with a "connective eye" can help groups or parties who must work or live interdependently (through geography, industry, etc.) with those who often have quite different agendas and goals, to focus together on problems that the enlightened leader recognizes they share even when, especially when others don't "get it." Lipman-Blumen believes that these two global tensions will be with us for some time to come. Leaders who don't develop the understanding and skills to deal with them effectively are almost certain to fail. I am reminded of what Edison once said about innovation: It is the ability to make connections. That is as true of the Gaza Strip as it is of an incandescent light.

I highly recommend this book to senior-level executives, of course, who seek that "edge" for themselves as well as for their organizations. But I also highly recommend this book to others whom Lipman-Blumen may not have had primarily in mind when she wrote the book: Clergy, teachers, coaches, and (especially) parents. Youth ages (let's say) 6-16 also have a great need for the "connective" leadership which Lipman-Blumen advocates. The impact of their leadership on young people may well have much greater impact than that of anyone else, especially now when the world is more interdependent than at any prior time in human history.

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