

Four- Cornered Leadership: A Framework for Making Decisions

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Four-Cornered Leadership: A framework for making decisions is written by John Roland Schultz who is an independent management consultant and retired professor. The author describes the book as one on leadership. Borrowing heavily from the work of Edward Deming, the author centers the book on four elements comprising the system of profound knowledge.

The book is organized in seven chapters. The first chapter gives a very clear and concise view of the concept of leadership. This chapter offers a remarkable outline of the theoretical foundation of leadership theory. A reader who has a formal management education will feel nostalgic while reading through the various theories of leadership described in the book. The author assumes that the reader has some theoretical knowledge about the theories of leadership and hence makes only a ringside view about the concepts.

The second chapter deals with the basics of organization and the importance of system interdependencies. The author takes a theoretical approach describing the various concepts of organizational theory and behavior. The third chapter is concerned with the individual behavior touching upon the concepts like motivation, learning, complexity of human nature etc. The chapter briefs the readers about group and organizational dynamics stressing the importance of understanding formal and informal networks in an organization.

The fourth chapter focuses on organizational learning. The author roots in the theories of Jung and Deming putting forth an impressive commentary on learning and development. The fifth highlights the variability of work. The author impresses upon the importance of using data for decision making. Starting with a basic framework of using charts and graphs for interpreting data, author proceed to give a nice view of using various types of measurements used in management and their indicators. Chapter six deals with creating a purposeful organization and examines the importance of purpose and proceeds to explain how to create a statement of purpose. The chapter also touches on the importance of anchoring the purpose through action and communicating the purpose to the stakeholders.

The final chapter relates to managing the dynamics, interdependencies and interactions that characterize the system of profound knowledge. The chapter talks about the need for planning (strategy) and then organize (create structure) coordinate and control. The chapter elaborates on the various management functions like monitoring, problem-solving, decision making, building relationships.

The entire book is based on Edward Deming's system of profound knowledge. The four pillars of system of profound knowledge are

- Appreciation for the system
- Understanding variation and data based decisions
- Understanding individual and organizational psychology
- Understanding individual and organizational learning.

The title of the book: Four-Cornered Leadership gives an impression that the book is about leadership and discloses some new perspectives about leadership. But the book falls short of doing justice to the theme. The readers are given a thorough grounding on the various management theories but the book fails to move beyond the current literature.

The book is a good read for management professionals in the middle management cadre who desire to revisit the concepts learned during their management education. The book will be useful for trainers and consultants for acquiring a perspective of the tools used for measuring organizational performance. The only new perspective revealed in this book is the connect established between Edward Deming's 'System of Profound Knowledge' and Leadership. The book has lot of insights and the best part of the book is the various tools presented to practicing managers. The author has done lot of research to consolidate and present useful tools and metrics for practicing managers.

The book indicates an exhaustive range of management tools (both classic and modern) under one umbrella of Deming's System of Profound Knowledge. This book can be useful as a quick reference guide of these metrics. There lies the question whether the author has been able to bring in any new thoughts or metrics is successfully.

Conclusion

The book can be described as a book on 'Management theory' than on 'Leadership'. The reader will be disappointed if he/she expects the book to give insights into new leadership perspectives. The book however gives a concise view of the important theoretical frameworks which can be used for better decision making.