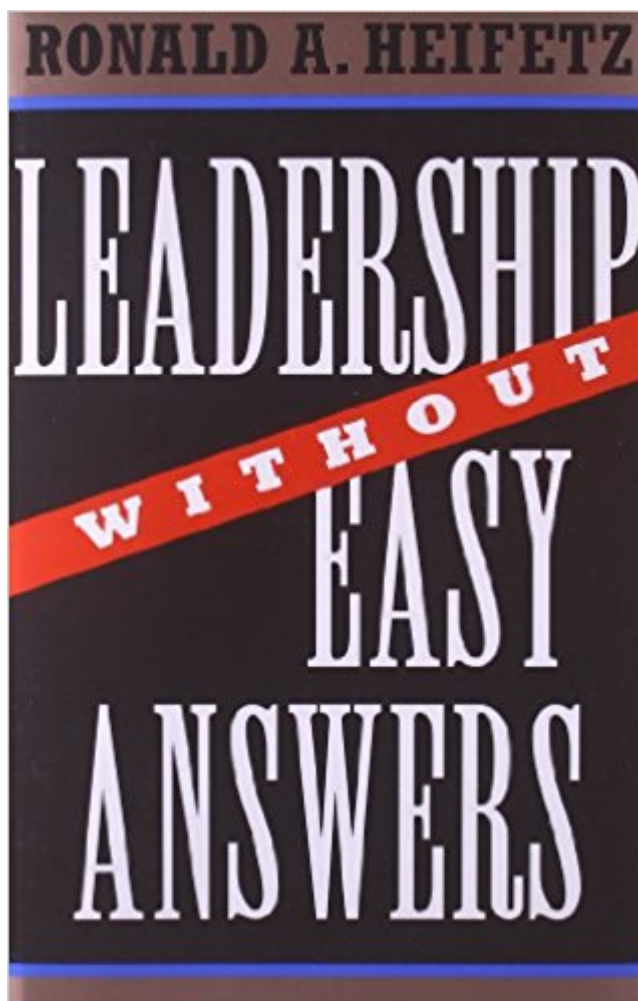


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Leadership Without Easy Answers



Synopsis

The economy uncertain, education in decline, cities under siege, crime and poverty spiraling upward, international relations roiling: we look to leaders for solutions, and when they don't deliver, we simply add their failure to our list of woes. In doing so, we do them and ourselves a grave disservice. We are indeed facing an unprecedented crisis of leadership, Ronald Heifetz avows, but it stems as much from our demands and expectations as from any leader's inability to meet them. His book gets at both of these problems, offering a practical approach to leadership for those who lead as well as those who look to them for answers. Fitting the theory and practice of leadership to our extraordinary times, the book promotes a new social contract, a revitalization of our civic life just when we most need it. Drawing on a dozen years of research among managers, officers, and politicians in the public realm and the private sector, among the nonprofits, and in teaching, Heifetz presents clear, concrete prescriptions for anyone who needs to take the lead in almost any situation, under almost any organizational conditions, no matter who is in charge. His strategy applies not only to people at the top but also to those who must lead without authority--activists as well as presidents, managers as well as workers on the front line.

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Customer Reviews

Heifetz (Kennedy Sch. of Government, Harvard Univ.) presents a new theory of leadership for both public and private leaders in tackling complex contemporary problems. Central to his theory is the distinction between routine technical problems, which can be solved through expertise, and

adaptive problems, such as crime, poverty, and educational reform, which require innovative approaches, including consideration of values. Four major strategies of leadership are identified: to approach problems as adaptive challenges by diagnosing the situation in light of the values involved and avoiding authoritative solutions, to regulate the level of stress caused by confronting issues, to focus on relevant issues, and to shift responsibility for problems from the leader to all the primary stakeholders. The theory is applied to an analysis of historical accounts of local, national, and international events. An innovative and thoroughgoing work; highly recommended for graduate and undergraduate collections. Jane M. Kathman, Coll. of St. Benedict Lib., St. Joseph, Minn. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Leadership Without Easy Answers is a masterwork of great subtlety, and of punch and practicality. Leadership is not value-free, Mr. Heifetz writes...[The author puts] soul and values squarely back into a vital topic, leadership. (Tom Peters New York Times Book Review) Ronald Heifetz brings knowledge of an astonishingly wide range of disciplines to this study of leadership...As a musician, a cellist, he understands that the quality of a performance depends on the audience as well as on the instrumentalist...As a psychiatrist, Heifetz understands that communities cannot be pushed beyond their capacity to adapt...These insights give to Heifetz's book an originality and vivacity one rarely associates with studies on leadership. He illustrates his theses with an extraordinary range of cases and examples...Leadership Without Easy Answers reminds us of democracy's rich potential. It is a bold book and an encouraging one. I hope some of our leaders are out there learning. (Shirley Williams Times Higher Education Supplement) This pioneering study constitutes one of the most insightful and innovative approaches to leadership studies in over a decade...Heifetz masterfully presents his new leadership model by intertwining general theory and prescriptive practical guidance through fertile historical and work-place case studies. Heifetz's goal is nothing less than a summoning for a new social contract that seeks to revitalize America's civic ethos by adopting leadership strategies to empower the citizenry rather than to merely enhance the authority of the leader...The upshot of this study should place it in the front line in leadership historiography for years to come. (R. J. Lettieri Choice) Heifetz presents a new theory of leadership for both public and private leaders in tackling complex contemporary problems. Central to his theory is the distinction between routine technical problems, which can be solved through expertise, and adaptive problems, such as crime, poverty, and educational reform, which require innovative approaches, including consideration of values. Four major strategies of leadership are identified: to approach problems as adaptive challenges by diagnosing the situation in light of the values involved and avoiding

authoritative solutions, to regulate the level of stress caused by confronting issues, and to shift responsibility for problems from the leader to all the primary stakeholders. The theory is applied to an analysis of historical accounts of local, national, and international events. An innovative and thoroughgoing work; highly recommended. (Library Journal) Ronald Heifetz has written an interesting and timely book, in which he moves away from the idea of leaders as visionaries and saviors to stressing leadership as an activity as opposed to a position of authority or a set of personal characteristics. (Robert Hooijberg Journal of Leadership Studies) A superb book for any age, but particularly for our current one, where society is so desperately in need of its wisdom and expertise. Leadership without Easy Answers should be required reading for top managers in all sectors--private, public, and nonprofit. I hope it will also be widely read by the citizenry that is so much in need of an attitude shift on the nature of authority. This book is also very much about citizenship. (M. Scott Peck, Author of The Road Less Traveled) Alive with insights, concepts, new ideas, just teeming with the kind of creative approach to the study of leadership that I and of course many others esteem. In a field in which there has been a great deal of repetitious work, Heifetz strikes out in ground-breaking directions. (James MacGregor Burns, Author of Leadership) Remarkably thoughtful, provocative, and useful. This book will be seen as a major contribution that provides a rare interdisciplinary view of leadership in context. Leaders as well as serious students of the process of leadership and the development of leaders need to have this book on their shelves. (General Walter Ulmer, U. S. Army (Ret.), President and CEO, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, North Carolina) Heifetz turns out to be one of the most thoughtful scholars on leadership. His direct and relevant concepts are pathbreaking. (James David Barber, Author of Presidential Character) Original and penetrating in its analysis of leadership. This is an excellent book. Important and valuable. (John Gardner, former Secretary HEW, Founder of Common Cause) Leadership without Easy Answers should go a long way toward clearing up many confusions about leadership. Long a master teacher of leaders, Heifetz's courses and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government have been standing-room only for years. Read this book and see why. (Peter Senge, author of The Fifth Discipline)

Heifetz presents a post-modern view of leadership responsible to the multiple voices and viewpoints that must be considered in today's context. Leading while respecting personal autonomy might appear impossible upon first glance. However, through case study analyses using history to guide as a lens, Heifetz appropriately condensed multiple concepts of effective yet balanced leadership. Taking into consideration one's own place in society or scope of influence as a leader proves to be

a central premise guiding decision-making and action. Published in 1998, one can easily see the concept of "leading from behind" not merely foreshadowed but illustrated in the text. A gift from Heifetz that becomes more relevant as time goes on.

This book provides meaningful clarity on the myriad aspects of leadership. Leading is the process of navigation through complex nuances that often lead to further conflict; and as Heifetz points out "disequilibrium." However, navigating through these may bring community vestment needed for reasonable solutions. The best advice is : "looking from the balcony " and using assessment to chart the way. Encourage anyone interested in change work to read this book.

This is an extraordinary and unique presentation on leadership. I have had several leadership positions and have carried the knowledge and lessons learned from this Heifetz book into each position and am convinced it made me a more productive leader. I recommend it to every person who wants to lead and support others in a more effective manner.

This book is awesome for teaching leadership principles in any area..... yes... even church leaders !!!

Keeping centered with focus on getting the job done.

Reads easily like a novel. The author uses present day and historical examples for clarification. Enjoyable read!

It was a textbook for class. I wasn't a fan of what Heifetz had to say about leadership, but that's a personal issue. The book was well written and laid out appropriately.

I have enjoyed reading this book and discovering the challenges that leaders face in becoming more than just a leader. It really opened my eyes to things that I had not seen, but needed to see to make me a great leader. Many historical examples to help me visualize the kind of leader I needed to be.

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