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Szczepan Gawłowski, Henryk Mruk, 2016. *Przywództwo. Teoria i praktyka* [Leadership. Theory and practice], Rebis Publishing House, Poznań, 270, ISBN 978-83-8062-123-7

The reviewed book is an important and interesting work on leadership. It was written by Henryk Mruk – an academic working closely with business, a professor at the Poznań University of Economics and Business, and Szczepan Gawłowski – a practician, founder and long-term president of Kreisel Construction Technology. The book consists of an introduction, fifteen logically interlinked chapters and conclusions. The considerations contained in it the book are based on both recent theoretical achievements and practical experience.

The authors in referring to the output of behavioural economics state that people as social beings, function in various groups. As with many animal species, a hierarchy is created in groups, headed by a leader. The authors define business leadership as the process of formulating goals and choosing the means for achieving them, as well as the selection of people, their motivation and development (p. 15). The beginning of the 21st century has increased the demand for education, knowledge, and teamwork, which leads business leaders to seek effective ways to manage their teams. The business world needs professionally prepared and ethical leaders.

The methodology of the work refers to the logical inference, observations, quali-

tative interviews, critical analysis of literature and secondary information. Short anecdotes – case studies – are intended to facilitate managers' reading in order to work on themselves, self-reflection about their own leadership style, as well as developing a programme of individual development.

The authors first present the essence of leadership and the tasks and characteristics of leaders (Chapter 1). They discuss briefly and critically different leadership concepts referring to the latest business solutions, dominated by teams based on trust and flat structures contrasting with highly hierarchical corporations (Chapter 2). In the following chapters the authors refer to the leader's most important functions, e.g.: responsibility for long-term development, introduction of change and the organization of task teams (Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6). They critically discuss ways to motivate employees (Chapter 7), the principles of internal and external communication (Chapter 8), and a classification of decision-making processes (Chapter 9).

Chapter 10 is devoted to the methods of personal development. The starting point is the belief that leadership skills help to strengthen the company's market position. The key to effective leadership is planning and implementing personal de-

velopment. The leader is constantly monitored by employees and the environment. His credibility is much more involved with behaviour than words, which is rightly attributed to the Roman saying „*verba docent, exempla trahunt*” – words teach, examples attract. The leader needs to build trust: in what he/she says and does and what he/she did in the past. Building trust within a team consists of straight talking, showing respect for other views, taking care to ensure transparency, keeping one's word, and resolving the problem (p. 109).

It is important to maintain harmony in personal development in three dimensions: work – family – social relationships, as well as the balance of physical, intellectual and spiritual development. Every leader must realize that he/she will have to make many difficult decisions alone and moments of solitude will be a part of his/her work.

Chapter 11 is devoted to the role of women in management and their impact on the function of companies. The 21st century brought changes in stereotypes about women's leadership. Social and historical conditions cause them to overcome more barriers than men on the road to leadership. There are more and more examples showing that women perform well as leaders.

The next chapters discuss talent management and the important issue of succession in family businesses. In a knowledge-based economy it is very important to attract, retain, motivate and develop talent. This is why an important skill for a manager is to recognize and improve the innate ability of people. The ability to define the need for specific managerial skills and to find people with specific potential is one of the most important tasks of every leader. The problem of the taking over companies by the younger generation is very important in Poland, because

a major part of the businesses established at the beginning of the transformation in the 1990s are facing the problem of generational change. As a pattern of succession the authors describe the case of the thriving Polish Novol company founded by two friends in the chemical industry. Their sons-successors were being prepared to take over the company for several years (p. 221).

The last two chapters are devoted to presenting the results of Polish companies' research on the competencies of boards and supervisory board members. It appears that the group of managers surveyed overestimated their own competencies with respect to the competencies of other board members (p. 240). These results confirm the psychological phenomenon known as over-confidence which is especially common amongst managers. The competencies of the supervisory boards were also examined. The managers surveyed indicated three types of competencies that are particularly important and should be reinforced: talent development, value-based building of business, and the creation of effective relationships (p. 243).

The last chapter deals with the ethical dimension of leadership which is not frequently found in literature, particularly in Poland. This thread runs through the whole work. The authors repeatedly referred to the issue of honesty, respect for values, corporate social responsibility and the philosophy of creating a better world. Leaders are responsible for the integrity of the economy within the social sphere as well as balancing the entire ecosystem on the planet. The authors emphasize that the stable market position of a company can be built only by respecting ethical standards. Thus business leaders are responsible for their creation and observance in respect of the staff and the environment. The ethical guidelines for each leader should

be Plato's four principles: prudence, justice, valor and restraint (p. 257).

Together with the development of management sciences a variety of theories and concepts have emerged that seek to explain the leadership functions in an enterprise. Every man is genetically equipped with a variety of traits. There is no single answer to the question of the extent to which a leader is born with leadership qualities and the extent to which it shapes itself in the way of education and the gaining of experience. The authors refer to the report on behavioural economics that 3-5% of the population has a reduced sense of ethical standards and therefore administrative restrictions on their leadership role should be introduced (p. 250-251). However the authors, recognizing the complexity of this problem, do not propose what should be done.

Behavioural economics can be especially helpful in the improvement of leadership using the latest knowledge of natural psychological tendencies in decision-making. Knowledge of this topic, as shown by researchers, does not translate directly into a better quality of decision-making but may help in introducing special hedg-

ing procedures. The authors present a long list of traps in to which leaders fall under the influence of unconscious but universal emotions (p. 166-170) such as: planning fallacy, the sunk costs' effect, the halo effect, status quo defense, etc.

Leaders, when taking complicated long-term decisions, should seek to clarify them by confronting different points of view. The authors present different ways of improving the quality of strategic decisions, for example: premortem analysis (p. 164). Leaders should find time to improve their knowledge and should also treat existing stereotypes with caution.

In summary the book reviewed occupies a niche between research works and guidance books written by consultants which seek to guide and offer a recipe for easy success with an attractive slogan. The authors skillfully combine their experience, supported by numerous anecdotes, with the latest achievements in behavioural economics. This combination makes the book easy to read.

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Aims and Scope

Economics and Business Review is the successor to the Poznań University of Economics Review which was published by the Poznań University of Economics and Business Press in 2001–2014. The Economics and Business Review is a quarterly journal focusing on theoretical and applied research work in the fields of economics, management and finance. The Review welcomes the submission of articles for publication dealing with micro, mezzo and macro issues. All texts are double-blind assessed by independent reviewers prior to acceptance.

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