

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW

Book Title: ***The Business of People: Leadership for the Changing World***

Author: **Iain Fraser, Madeleine Taylor**

Publisher: CRS Press – Taylor & Francis Group

List Price: US\$59.95

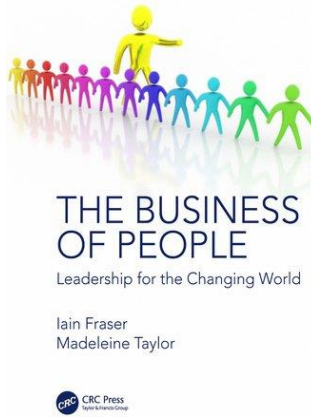
Format: 189 pages, hardcover, softcover, ebook

Publication Date: July 2019

ISBN: 13: 978-9-367-25102-4

Reviewer: **Muriel Hairston-Cooper, PMP**

Review Date: January 2021



Introduction

In the past, publications about leadership were many times structured for an elite, monolithic reader who traditionally co-existed in a secluded world, where business entrances reflected images of portraits hung in the corner offices. *The Business of People: Leadership for the Changing World* is today's remedy for this outdated structure. The book presents a realistic view about the skill sets needed to successfully navigate leadership in the 21st century.

By taking a “people” approach through a quick-read process, the authors have paired psychological examination, cultural experiences, and practical advice that is both non-judgmental, yet gently probing to challenge the reader as a leader and as a human being.

Overview of Book's Structure

The book's theme revolves around the leadership theories of Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus - Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA). Although the book was published in 2019, it has timely content that acknowledges the implications of living in the unforeseen 2020 VUCA environment. With a reader-friendly dialogue, the authors inject critical information through an emotional lens followed with a sense of lightness and empathy.

In keeping with our diverse workforce, “Sam,” (an intentionally-chosen gender-neutral name) is portrayed in a number of positions as *they/she/he/his/her* career moves from

a staffer to mid-level management to the role of the CEO. Each chapter starts with a story that focuses on specific topics that Sam is dealing with – both on a professional and personal front and moves to offer key solutions for the situation. Non-identifiable, but real case studies are introduced followed by a selection of resource tools and guidance. The authors also offer the reader a group of poems to offer a “woosah” moment – much needed in this VUCA environment and again reflective on the “human” recognition that is needed in navigating leadership roles.

Highlights

The Business of People lives up to its title to put *people first*. The book examines what we in project management are hearing more and more about in the importance of critical “soft skills.” No longer under the era in which the “boss must walk softly and carry a big stick,” businesses are now seeking those who know how to use soft skills as tools of development, engagement, and persuasion.

One of the most useful sections takes an in-depth look at communications and culture and its influence on our personal and professional lives. Describing it as “stroking patterns,” or in PMP language – soft skills – the authors encourage leaders not to rely on what may have been left from previous administrations, but instead to develop their own recognition standards based on today’s workforce. Creating management recognition awareness templates will set the tone for the organization. The authors share an example of how communication can be used to stroke or kick colleagues:

Individual

Positive Conditional – “I like it when you arrive on time.”

Negative Conditional – “I am disappointed in the report that you wrote.”

Positive Unconditional – “I think you are great.”

Negative Unconditional - “You are a waste of space.”

Group/Team Example

Positive Conditional – “You all worked together to reach the target.”

Negative Conditional – “I am unhappy about the way that you all giggled when the guests arrived.”

Positive Unconditional – “You are a great team.”

Negative Unconditional – “This team is underperforming.”

Highlights: What I liked!

The book gives relatable examples and draws the reader to examine her/his values and the positive or negative effects they can have in the workplace. Again, published in 2019 – many of the ideas are around in-person gatherings. I would like to see the authors’ suggestions translated into the virtual and or hybrid environment that we are currently experiencing. Maybe an update to the book? (Hint, hint)

Who might benefit from the Book?

Anyone who may be questioning their ability to lead – those who have been filled with doubt - or question as to how to begin to be viewed by others as a leader should read this book, and then read it again.

Conclusion

Words are very powerful. How we use language can be motivational or deflating. Much of our language was ingrained in us from our early years and many times we are not even conscious of the interpretation that one hears. It is important to take an inward look before stepping into a leadership role. Part of that internal probe is recognizing the human element that is in each of us. *The Business of People: Leadership for the Changing World* has managed to accomplish this with the right amount of openness – providing a safe space and concluding with peaceful thoughts through poetry – again reinforcing soft skills and shared values.

For more about this book, go to: <https://www.routledge.com/The-Business-of-People-Leadership-for-the-Changing-World/Fraser-Taylor/p/book/9781032091037>

Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the [PMI Silver Spring Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Silver Spring Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Silver Spring Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. Chapter members are generally mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books.

If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact editor@pmworldjournal.com.

About the Reviewer



Muriel Hairston-Cooper, PMP

Maryland, USA



Muriel Hairston-Cooper is a member of the Silver Spring, Maryland Chapter of PMI and earned her PMP certification in 2018. She is the senior manager of stakeholder engagement at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. A servant-leader, she has been responsible for constructing relationships with congressional leaders and staff, CEOs, and organizations around public policy and civic engagement, directing communications and public affairs, managing programs, coordinating special events, compiling budgetary aspects of national conferences, and cultivating philanthropic partnerships. She can be contacted at Coopermuriel01@gmail.com or <https://www.linkedin.com/in/muriel-cooper-4b617921/>