

WELD Leadership Book Review

Title: "The Deep Blue Sea. Rethinking the Source of Leadership"

Author: Wilfred Drath

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Reviewer: Susan E. Parker; University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service

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The proposed idea in this book is that personal relationships are key when trying to understand leadership. The author's believes that the main issue causing us confusion is that "leadership is something leaders possess as an individual attribute and, therefore leadership is given by, created by, leaders", but he feels this is not true. He looks for the larger meaning of leadership and that includes the relationship between the "leader" and the "worker". Drath presents what he feels are the limitations of our understanding of leadership and how these limitations can be conquered and allowing the forming of an understanding which will create new possibilities.

I thought the author would speak in generalities but Drath spends an entire chapter of a five chapter book discussing how leadership is based on the tasks that people need to accomplish and the knowledge principles available for use today. There are three knowledge principles presented and they include *personal dominance*, *interpersonal influence*, and *relational dialogue* and the author discusses each principle in depth. The information is reinforced with the help of a running scenario of a new manager taking over the leadership of an established company with established ideas of what leadership is.

The personal dominance is defined as the understanding leadership as it relates to the personal characteristics of a leader, and is "assumed to come from within". This principle takes for granted that leadership is something a person possesses, is an expression of personally possessed qualities or characteristics, and leaders lead because followers are convinced of the truth of their leadership. Interpersonal influence is the understanding that leadership happens when a group of people agree and disagree, plan and negotiate until someone claims the role of leader. The truths taken for granted here are that leadership is a role occupied by the most influential person, people possess or can acquire certain qualities and characteristics that enable them to be effective in this role, followers are actively involved in the process of negotiating influence, and leaders are lead by influencing followers more than the followers influence the leader. Relational dialogue is the understanding that leadership happens when people who acknowledge shared work create environments in which tasks can be accomplished. Here the leadership is the property of a social system, individuals do not possess leadership, but leadership happens when people collaborate, and if there is an individual leader then the actions of that person are an aspect of participation in the leadership process.

In summary, this book approaches leadership as something that is developed by people who share common ideas which show them that leadership is actually occurring. Leadership is something that can happen or can not happen due to the presence or absence of some principle that organizes peoples' knowledge about leadership. My experience has led me to believe the idea that leadership is not really recognized as leadership unless we acknowledge it (a central point in the book) is valid. The relationships we have with others are a key factor in a group establishing "a leader".

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Too often in thinking about leadership we are like persons standing on the shore, captivated by the dancing, sparkling whitecaps on the ocean and entirely missing the deep blue sea. The whitecaps are real enough, but their sources lies within the action of the ocean itself (p. xiv-xv). Wilfred Drath, from the center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, March 26 2010 THE DEEP BLUE SEA RETHINKING THE SOURCE OF THE DEEP BLUE SEA METAPHOR

Too often in thinking about leadership we are like persons standing on the shore captivated by the dancing sparkling whitecaps on the ocean and entirely miss Using oceanography, computer science and information theory to sift through historical records and explore the deep sea, the scientists of the Columbus-America Discovery Group established mankind's first real working presence on the deep ocean floor. Battling storms, technological challenges and intrusive salvagers, they recovered mint-state coins, antique bars and sparkling gold dust from what Life magazine described as "the greatest treasure ever found." It is a fascinating chronicle of the technological breakthroughs at the frontiers of knowledge, in which deep-sea robots were developed to perform heavy, delicate and complex work. And it is an incredibly exciting adventure story of the human will to succeed, a compelling tale of the triumph of making possible the impossible.