

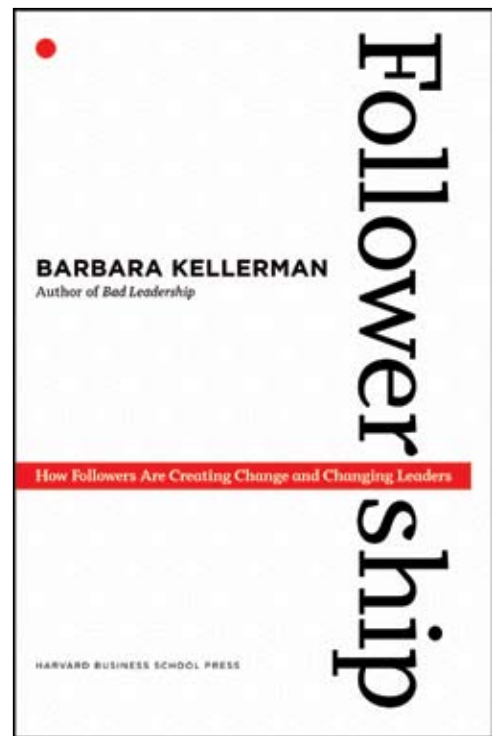
FOLLOWERS TAKE THE LEAD

Followership: How Followers Are Creating Change and Changing Leaders

By Barbara Kellerman

(Harvard Business School Press, 336 pp., \$29.95)

Reviewed by Pam Leigh



Followership opens with author Barbara Kellerman's synopsis of the George Orwell short story "Shooting an Elephant."

This cautionary tale written in the mid-1930s possesses a disturbing ending, but the tale is well-chosen to illuminate Kellerman's thesis that followers are important. However there's only one small problem, she says: "As Orwell's tale makes plain, exactly who are the leaders and who are the followers is not always completely clear."

A book on followership departs from the leader-centric approach that dominates current management literature, or what Kellerman refers to as the "leadership industry." But who can doubt its importance as a topic when confronted with the ubiquitous news stories of the many CEOs who have recently toppled from their high perches. This seismic shift in the previous balance of power between leaders and followers offers a contemporary cautionary tale: leaders who ignore or dismiss their followers do so at their own peril.

Kellerman's thesis is that just as leaders fall into categories on a continuum

from good to bad, so, too, do followers. The challenge in distinguishing between a good or a bad follower (as with a good or bad leader) depends on your fundamental values, and what you think of the leader and the followers in a particular situation.

Before Kellerman gets to the meat of her thesis—her take on the five types of followers—she traces the circuitous path of followership. She takes us on a mini history lesson, first back to the mid-1700s and the beginnings of political dissent, and that century's famous revolutions. She then examines the origins of our fear of following, and

documents the changes that occurred in how we defined leadership both before and after World War II, and especially during the social and political upheavals of the late 1960s and 1970s. Kellerman shows what a powerful tool the Internet, and particularly blogging, has become in changing the dynamic between those who hold positions of power and those who do not.

While the author's voice in these chapters sometimes bears witness to her current position as a James MacGregor Burns lecturer at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, Kellerman's historical perspective is peppered with enough interesting examples to illustrate her points—from Professor Stanley Milgram's infamous experiments on obedience, to current events, such as what befell talk show host Don Imus—that the reader gladly stays with her.

Our reward, and where we finally get to the good stuff, is a thoroughly engrossing part two, in which the four types of engaged followers are described. (The fifth type, the isolate, is dispensed within six pages since there's not much to say about a follower who is completely detached. As the author says, "isolates have a problem. Isolates are a problem.")

As for the other four types—the bystander, the participant, the activist, and the diehard—Kellerman illustrates exactly the kind of power, for better or worse, each of these follower types can wield.

Rather than just tell us what her categories mean, Kellerman shows us the power behind the actions or inactions of the four types. Just as Orwell's short story drives home his points, so do Kellerman's well-chosen short stories illustrate hers. In chapters devoted to each type, she describes real-life historical events (for example, Nazi Germany, Merck and the Vioxx debacle, Boston's crisis in the Catholic Church, and Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan) in which a particular type of follower dominated. In so doing, she

captures the profile of the follower type and provides the reader with a concrete understanding of how followers behave and why.

In her final chapter, "Transformations," Kellerman talks about how followership is changing the workplace and the public arena. For the workplace, she provides suggestions of effective followership tools, such as managing up, quiet resistance, and collective action. For the public arena, she lists 18 action steps we each can take to counteract the low level of civic and political engagement that characterizes America today.

This read is worth three cups of a deep-roasted brew.

Pam Leigh is a freelance writer from Reston, Virginia; pleighwriter@earthlink.net.

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Spring Into Action

EDITORS REVIEW THREE MORE TITLES SURE TO MAKE AN IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS

BIG Ideas to BIG Results: Remake and Recharge Your Company, Fast

By Michael Kanazawa and Robert H. Miles
(FT Press, 256 pp., \$27.95)

Breaking the lethargy or changing course inside an organization that is conditioned to routine is one of the toughest tasks a leader faces. Michael Kanazawa and Robert H. Miles sketch a roadmap for organizations seeking ways to reenergize staff. One method they advocate for building engagement is “tablework”—a new word for an old concept meaning forming small group discussions within a large meeting.



The authors also caution leaders about what to avoid when launching a new initiative. One typical half-hearted commitment is the dreaded “pilot” project—a feel-good initiative that allows individuals or departments resistant to change to delay their participation in a new initiative. Executives must root out lingering opposition early and demand that any nonurgent work that could compete with the new project be shelved temporarily.

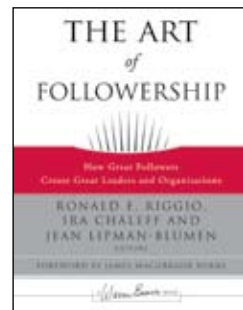
Companies that rely on outside services might wish to meet directly with clients they lost or failed to attract, and ask them how they could improve their product or service. Oftentimes, such findings will both shock and energize the company’s leaders and the entire team.

Michael Laff

The Art of Followership: How Great Followers Create Great Leaders and Organizations

Edited by Ronald E. Riggio, Ira Chaleff, and Jean Lipman-Blumen
(Jossey-Bass, 416 pp., \$55)

Leaders are honored for their innovative ideas, strategic initiatives, and forward thinking. But what about the followers—a group that has largely been ignored? Lately, there have been quite a few books on followership, a concept that explores how followers contribute to effective leadership.



This book examines the multiple roles that followers can play in the workplace and the complex relationship they have with leaders. *The Art of Followership* is divided into four main parts: defining and redefining followership, effective followership, the pitfalls and challenges of followership, and followers and leaders—research, practice, and the future.

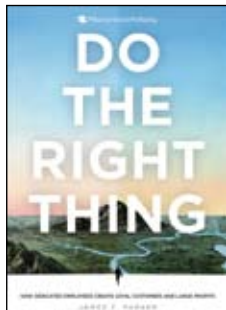
With contributions from leading scholars and practitioners, this book highlights the different models, perspectives, and meanings of followership. It also explores the contributions that followers make to groups, organizations, societies, and leaders.

Paula Ketter

Do the Right Thing: How Dedicated Employees Create Loyal Customers and Large Profits

By James F. Parker
(Wharton School Publishing, 288 pp., \$22.99)

James F. Parker served as CEO and chairman of Southwest Airlines from June 2001 through July 2004—one of the most tumultuous periods for the airline industry. During Parker’s tenure, one of Southwest’s greatest accomplishments was being the only major airline to protect the jobs of all its employees while still remaining profitable after 9/11. In so doing, Southwest became a model American success story.



In *Do the Right Thing*, Parker outlines how superior customer service and profits can be achieved by sticking to employees-first values. The book discusses the corporate culture of Southwest, which is built on a sturdy foundation of frontline employees with initiative. Using examples from World War II as well as sports, Parker explains the inherent benefits of a nonhierarchical structure.

Sprinkled throughout the book are a bevy of personal stories involving handing out peanuts to passengers on flights; how Southwest listened to a single employee’s idea for ticketless travel in 1993; how a job candidate’s neglected breast pump attracted a bomb squad, but also got her hired; and how a free bottle of whiskey helped win a price war with a competitor. Parker’s story indicates that great leaders don’t just oversee companies, they also constitute them.

Aparna Nancherla

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