

## The Damage Done by Toxic Leaders

The most damaging leaders I've come across in the workplace are those who don't know how to value the people who work for them. They may be egomaniacs or control freaks that suck the life out of their employees, giving little back in positive reinforcement. Some people continue to work for destructive managers because they need their job or are too demoralized to leave and find something better. Still others believe that this is the way leaders should behave-as know-it-all, empire builders-with little concern for the people who fall by the wayside. The people who don't thrive under this kind of leadership may, in fact, be viewed as poor leadership material themselves, not tough enough for the game.

Two new books deal with different aspects of leadership. One by Liz Wiseman (a former executive at the Oracle Corporation and former vice president of Oracle University) with Greg McKeown, entitled "Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter," deals with two different types of leaders, dubbed by the authors "Multipliers" and "Diminishers." Multipliers attract and invest in talent and motivate employees to do their best. Diminishers, on the other hand, are self-centered and drain the intelligence from their employees, extracting diminished performances from demoralized employees.

The authors analyzed 150 executives across America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, and have identified what they consider the five most important disciplines that help managers act more like multipliers: talent magnet, liberator, challenger, debate maker and investor. Most people are neither multipliers nor diminishers, but fall somewhere along a continuum between the two extremes. The challenge for people who aspire to be great leaders is to find a way to do more that will add value to the lives and performance of those who work for you-multiplying the efforts of the workforce without extracting financial or psychic costs.

"The Female Vision: Women's Real Power at Work" by Sally Helgesen and Julie Johnson looks at differences between what women and men see, what they value and how they connect the dots. A woman's way of seeing leverages women's talents and too often is overlooked in a workplace that places great value on quantitative measurements and less on what is hard to measure, such as emotional intelligence.

Women excel at broad-spectrum perceptions, the authors say, that can widen the scope of information available to organizations and provide important clues about human relationships, changing markets and potential conflicts. Women also focus on the quality of their day-to-day work life and not abstract measures of achievement. Men are more focused on the win, or the game, and are willing to sacrifice their current happiness for a future goal. Women's desire for balance and their ability to put their work in a broader social context can offer organizations a way to motivate employees at a profound level.

When women get fed up with corporate life they sometimes leave to start their own successful businesses. The authors cite research from a study by Margaret Heffernan that shows that companies owned by women are "twice as likely to stay in business as those owned by men, while those owned by women of color are four times more likely to survive." What is it that women entrepreneurs value? They don't judge their company's success by size. Instead, they focus on providing a superior experience for clients and customers, and tend to think long-term, making them skeptical of rapid growth.

The values that women entrepreneurs bring to their ventures can be helpful to any organization, since they spur creativity, collaboration and focus on relationships. These are all critical to the types of companies that will thrive in the years ahead. What type of environment do you thrive in? Is the company you are currently working for providing it?