

On Mission and Leadership
by Frances Hesselbein & Rob Johnston, editors

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Reviewed by David W. Gill www.ethixbiz.com

On Mission and Leadership brings together, under the auspices of the Peter Drucker Foundation, twelve essays from an impressive group of leaders. The overall message is that “the effective organization is built around mission---the reason for being---and effective leaders mobilize around and communicate mission at all times” (p. x). Warren Bennis’s essay on leadership in a knowledge era and on character is a superb contribution. A great interview with Body Shop founder and progressive business leader Anita Roddick, and chapters from “emotional intelligence” guru Daniel Goleman and consultants Patrick Lencioni, contribute not just variety but insight to the topic.

William Pollard of Service Master and David Lawrence of Kaiser Permanente contribute essays on mission-centered leadership that are worth the price of the book by themselves. I almost called up my nearby Kaiser Clinic to go in for a check-up after reading Lawrence! Dee Hock’s essay on “chaordic” leadership, Henry Mintzberg’s on “managing quietly” in which he deliciously debunks “management by barking around” bluster, and Robert Knowling’s closing chapter on “Why Vision Matters” are each full of wisdom.

Banging the drum for “mission-control ethics” is not a new or eccentric message---though it is easily lost, especially when we are facing various crises---that an inspiring, shared mission is not only the starting point but the guiding star throughout the journey of a good business, an appropriate technology, and a sound ethics. One can hardly do better than study this little volume to understand why---and how---this is so.