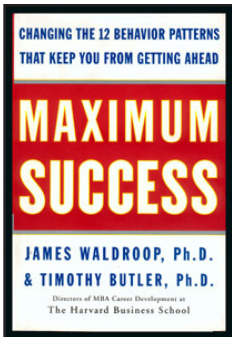


Book Reviews for Managers

Maximum Success

Changing the 12 Behavior Patterns that Keep You From Getting Ahead

by James Waldroop & Timothy Butler



Currency/Doubleday,
2000,
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"The 'attack' on 'us' comes not from outside but from another part of ourselves"

REVIEWED BY IAN COOK

Why do talented people fail or fall short of their potential?

Most managers have felt this question bubble up as they thought about certain people in their unit. "Wendy has such promise. She's got the gray matter, the charm, the education. But she just withers away when dealing with the executive team." "Derek has phenomenal persistence and drive. He lets nothing stand between him and what he wants. Problem is the guy's in burnout mode. And his staff want nothing to do with him."

Maximum Success is worth a manager's time to read. James Waldroop and Timothy Butler, both business psychologists from the Harvard Business School, have done a great job identifying twelve distinct ways (they call them "Achilles heels") in which people stop themselves from succeeding in their work. And the dozen patterns their research has uncovered are psychological in origin. To quote them, "[in] our inner battles to be more aware and effective...the 'attack' on 'us' comes not from outside but from another part of ourselves."

I have a confession to make. I started reading this book to pick up ideas to help me in my work with managers. It was for them I was reading this, not for me! Yet, as I worked my way through the patterns, with catchy handles like *Career Acrophobe*, *Home Run Hitter*, *Mr. Spock*, *Couldabeen*, *Meritocrat*, *Rebel*, and *Pessimist-Worrier*, I saw a lot of myself in their descriptions. You will see reflections of yourself too. Why is this so? Clearly the authors have tapped into some universal patterns—Carl Jung called them archetypes—that seem to be hardwired into the human species when it engages in collective labor. The

authors' twelve patterns happen over and over again, at every hierarchical level, in every line of work, down through the years and off into the future. Together they explain the **self-generated** causes of people failing outright in their job or falling short of their potential. They deserve the attention of managers.

This book can help you in three ways:

1. In addressing performance shortfalls with certain of your individual employees.
2. In coaching and mentoring your staff.
3. In becoming more aware of how you shoot yourself in the foot with your own less-than-functional "default" responses to people and situations at work.

Part I of *Maximum Success* devotes a chapter to each pattern. First the authors explain the pattern and describe how it operates at work. Then they suggest the origins of this dysfunctional approach, usually rooted in one's parental upbringing, family dynamics and early psychological development. Finally—and here's some "gold"—they suggest ways that the individual can reduce the hold this pattern has on his or her own work life and what the manager can do to support this process.

For example, *Peacekeepers* will do whatever it takes to maintain at least a veneer of harmony and to avoid conflict, even if it means performance results or the quality of a decision will suffer. They tend to fall short as leaders because of their reluctance to make what might be an unpopular decision. Their sometimes-phobic fear of anger becoming unleashed can be a holdover from growing up in a family where anger was never expressed.

The manager/ coach can help by teaching conflict management skills and by role-playing a potential conflict situation that calls for taking a strong stand.

Part II brings it all together by revealing four primary causes their research found underlying the twelve patterns. These causes yield four ways to overcome the negative influence of the patterns on one's job and career success:

1. Taking other people's perspective
2. Looking yourself (and your self-image) in the mirror
3. Coming to terms with authority
4. Using your power

The first two support research on Emotional Intelligence, specifically around the positive impact of two skill clusters called "self-awareness" and "social awareness." Once again we are reminded to develop more sensitive "radar," both with our self and with others.

But it is items 3 & 4 that I think really

deserve our attention. What a costly drain it is for employees to carry around psychological "baggage" about their managers as authority figures. And what a costly demotivator it is when managers are afraid to exercise their legitimate power or when they overuse their power! Managers need to become comfortable with possessing and using power-appropriately. And, since virtually everyone is an employee, we all need to be able to separate any unresolved issues with our parents from a psychologically healthy and productive relationship with our own boss.

The areas highlighted by *Maximum Success* are where the action is in managing performance in your organization and unit. We ALL need to become more sensitive to our own impact and to people who work with us. And we need to start facing up to how our staff and we deal with authority and power. This book gives you twelve behavioral patterns to consider as you encourage and assist your people to contribute the full extent of their potential

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Ian Cook, trainer, consultant, keynote speaker and Principal of Fulcrum Associates Inc., helps managers and supervisors get more from their people and teams through modern leadership approaches. Contact Ian to discuss the ideas in this article or to find out about related training programs, facilitation and coaching services, and keynote presentations for your organization.

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