
LEADERSHIP CLASSICS

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—J. Timothy McMahon

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Preface

Interest in leadership has exploded in the past three decades. The number of articles on this topic, according to Stogdill's *Handbook of Leadership*, was 3500 in 1974, doubling to 7500 in 1990, doubling again to 15,000 in 2007. Adding popular press books and articles that generally are not included in these estimates would surely produce a total of 30,000 or higher.

This dramatic increase is clearly warranted given the enhanced complexity, interdependence, globalization, and accelerated pace of change in today's organizational environment. Gone is the predictability of the past; many of the methods, concepts, and techniques previously used for managing—and in many cases still used—are no longer effective. It is clear that coping with change is now the central element of organizational effectiveness and this requires inspired leadership throughout the organization. This pressure to cope and lead in times of uncertainty and rapid change has fueled the leadership information explosion.

The primary focus of this book is on leaders and their followers in formal organizations: business, government, and nonprofit. The material is relevant for those in or aspiring to leadership positions, which require both "leader" and "manager" behaviors. Gardner's suggestion in the first selection to adopt the term "leader/manager" makes a great deal of sense. Doing so embraces the broad responsibilities of the role, yet does not negate the very real differences between leader and manager behaviors—distinctions that are covered in detail in several of the selections.

So one might ask, "What is the role of the classics in this current change-driven environment?" Two cogent points provide the answer. The first is simply that these classics are as relevant today as when they were written. A recent issue of *Fortune* noted that, with few exceptions, we haven't done a very good job of implementing the ideas that Douglas McGregor offered over fifty years ago. It seems that much knowledge about leadership has been set aside in a rush to simple, easy-to-implement solutions. Thus, we might logi-