

Deliberately Different: Fifty Years. Two Generations. Leading in a Changing World.

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Deliberately Different is an empowering leadership guide for those looking to shape the future for the better.

Leading by example, Judith M. von Seldeneck and Aileen K. Alexander's uplifting leadership guide *Deliberately Different* is full of inspirational material.

The book consists of a conversation between von Seldeneck, who launched her career in the 1960s on Capitol Hill and went on to found Philadelphia-based Diversified Search Group and break glass ceilings, and Alexander, who started out in the military in the 1990s and became CEO of the leading executive search firm. The executives discuss how the women's movement rose, how it evolved, and their own leadership stories, reflecting on crucial leadership traits and what makes for a good leader in a changing world. Stories about working for the Kennedy administration, about the Vietnam War era, and about being on active duty during 9/11 flesh out the book's historical background well:

It was a magical time in the nation's capital, often referred to as Camelot. Working in the US Senate was an honor and privilege! It allowed me to observe some great leaders in action, accumulating knowledge about others and learning on the job.

Eschewing the idea that there is one right way to lead, the book compiles general guidance for everyday use, as with the encouragement to use one's power to do good and to open gates for others. Principles like earning loyalty instead of demanding it arise, mined from experiences such as watching politicians exert influence by suggesting potential solutions after listening to people vent. The related tips are familiar but actionable, geared toward business contexts in which emotional intelligence and nurturing relationships have clear benefits. Values including embracing challenges, taking risks, and reading the room are covered in turn, as are intriguing factors like the importance of emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and adaptability.

Its prose reflecting the duo's good rapport, the book has an affirming and enthusiastic tone. It is also sometimes insular: The women exchange compliments and asides, and editorializing notes like "I absolutely love this quote" are included. They discuss speaking out, nurturing relationships, disarming situations, and challenging the status quo, engaging one another with respect. Everything works toward the book's concluding guidance on how to lead into the future, complemented by a recapitulation of the insights that appear throughout, on ranging topics like how homogeneous thinking leads to stagnation, on taking strategic risks, and on earning power and learning from those who came before you.

An empowering leadership guide, *Deliberately Different* reflects on decades of social progress to make recommendations for those looking to shape the future for the better.

JOSEPH S. PETE (November 20, 2024)

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