

Executive Being: Humanizing Business One Leader at a Time

Katherine Lazaruk

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With its emphasis on flow, creativity, and connection, the business guide Executive Being is appealing in suggesting holistic approaches to leadership.

Katherine Lazaruk's fresh leadership guide *Executive Being* eschews the characteristics often treated as the essential attributes of business leaders, including charisma, confidence, gravitas, and decisiveness, to argue against conformity.

In the book's view, a leader's connection with their followers is of supreme importance. The text advocates for leaders to be more vulnerable and to humanize their workplace environments, placing emphasis on what makes an executive relatable (naming behaviors such as accepting and owning one's imperfections). It questions long-held beliefs to shift leaders away from models that privilege hierarchical, authoritarian, and compartmentalized approaches, toward leadership that celebrates integrated, relational, and holistic approaches. It also includes an appendix of short topics that serve as touchpoints—alternate viewpoints for leaders to consider and to return to as needed reminders.

Written in plainspoken prose that's peppered with poetic sections, *Executive Being* encourages a less traditional viewpoint on a leader's presentation. To achieve this, alternative measures for success are named, shifting away from traditional leadership metrics like productivity and revenue. These different measurements are called the "Three C's" and include *character*, or knowing oneself deeply; *congruence*, or balancing expectations between people; and *choice*, or decision-making that helps align one's internal desires with external expectations.

Written as a companion to Lazaruk's consulting approaches or in lieu of one-on-one coaching, the book takes to task past models that reward workaholic behavior. It instead presents stewardship as a substitute. Its sections are short and to the point, with thought and writing exercises scattered throughout to guide in the application of its concepts. Poetic meditations reinforce the book's main points, such as:

*The best organizations
are built on relationships,
not hierarchy, and
to get there
you have to work through
what happens when
whole selves show up at the
boardroom table—sure, we need a
few leadership roles here and there but
in the buck stops here-ness only ...*

However, while such lines do disrupt linear and traditional thought patterns, they often read more like prose; their lack of artfulness is distracting.

Still, with its emphasis on flow, creativity, and connection, this is a text that unfolds in an appealing, informal manner, shifting with skill from direct addresses to business-informed thoughts. At times, though, its tonal shifts between straightforward prose and more colloquial language are jarring. Further, a number of the book's references are to recent business publications and consulting reports that could soon be out of date.

Executive Being is a business guide that shares ideas about achieving effective executive leadership that looks past outdated modes of running companies.

RENÉE NICHOLSON (October 25, 2024)

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