

Modern Manager: Conquering the Five Frustrations of Leadership

Corina Walsh

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Addressing the unique challenges of contemporary management in a clear manner, Modern Manager is a precise, actionable leadership guide.

In her business book *Modern Manager*, leadership coach Corina Walsh guides managers through keystone challenges to find joy in leading others.

Today's managers face five core frustrations, Walsh claims. They must delegate, coach, motivate, proffer feedback, and avoid micromanagement. But managers are promoted for their technical skills rather than their leadership prowess, the book says, and most lack the training and skills to deal with the "people side" of management. Walsh draws upon personal and professional experience as well as employee engagement data to identify these five core frustrations and suggest field-tested solutions in a clear, precise, and actionable manner.

The book makes an apt case for the unique challenges of modern management. The destigmatization of mental health challenges, for example, is posed as both a cultural win and a professional complication; today's employees are more likely to disclose mental health issues to their managers, though managers are not being trained to respond to these conversations or take on the role of counselor. Furthermore, the popular complaint that "no one wants to work anymore" is framed as an issue of motivation: employees want recognition and a sense of pride in their work, not pizza parties and prizes, the book asserts. It also pinpoints outdated management habits, such as the maxim to "hire slow and fire fast," and ineffective practices like the feedback sandwich, recommending better practices and tools in their stead, including the Manager's Scale, a visual aid to identify when an employee needs more micro- or macromanagement. Indeed, the book's approach to employees as individuals with unique needs is one of its strengths.

The book also discusses topics like "delegation disappointment," coaching, and motivation, sharing clear advice and concrete management tactics on each. Coaches should ask open-ended questions and guide employees through strategic thinking, it says, rather than simply telling, training, advising, or mentoring them. And managers shouldn't let a fear of micromanagement prevent them from any management; employees need boundaries, expectations, and check-ins, it states. However, in making its case, the book too often relies on re-created or fabricated conversations to illustrate its points, and some of its related language is too stilted to be convincing. Further, the book reiterates its key points and phrases in excess, detracting from their persuasiveness.

Modern Manager is a savvy, insightful leadership guide to effective, humancentric management.

HANNAH PEARSON (August 7, 2024)

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