

The Invisible Spotlight: Why Managers Can't Hide

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Scores of management and leadership books are published each year. Most of them seem to employ a gimmick of one sort or another. Some books approach the topic through the eyes of a celebrity, sports figure, war hero, or spiritual leader. Others carry a foreword by a superstar business executive. Still others are peppered with enough tips and techniques to make one's head spin.

Then there is *The Invisible Spotlight: Why Managers Can't Hide*, a book that is short on gimmicks and long on sound advice from two management consultants with thirty-five years of combined experience.

The premise of the book is deceptively simple: Every manager lives in an invisible spotlight that always shines on him or her. Others, in particular the employees who report to the manager, are constantly looking to him or her for guidance and feedback. As a result, the manager's "words and deeds carry enormous weight," note Wasserman and Katz.

Rather than write the book as a traditional management guide, the authors tell stories about their own experiences with both good and bad managers. Every story demonstrates interactions between a manager and an employee and shows the outcomes of the individuals' actions. Wasserman and Katz make observations about each story and sometimes describe the role they played in counseling the managers. Every anecdote offers an engaging and relevant learning experience.

In Part I of the book's three-part structure, The Management Relationship, the authors discuss the impact a manager has on employees' lives and why it is important for managers to script every action. Part II, Management Moments, covers such pertinent subjects as the discomfort of change, the "internal dialogue" a manager must have before confronting an employee about an unacceptable behavior, and the underestimated value of recognition and encouragement. In Part III, Management Passages, Wasserman and Katz address some of what they refer to as the "messy" realities of management, such as recognizing that one's own idiosyncrasies can intensify a problem with employees.

The Invisible Spotlight is simple, direct, and well written. Each chapter begins with a salient quote and a subtitle that encapsulates the chapter topic. To maintain consistency, the authors use the first-person singular voice, which makes their stories and advice all the more powerful.

The Invisible Spotlight is appropriate for both novice and experienced managers. Anyone with a desire to really understand the impact a manager can have on employees would do well to read it.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (October 3, 2011)

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