

# The Bookshelf

Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA

This is the time of year when facility leaders meet, change positions, and talk about new challenges so it seems appropriate to focus on books about leadership. Whether you are presently a facility leader or aspire to be one, you may want to learn more about either of these books. I found them particularly enjoyable since I joined a new campus, became in charge of the facilities organization, and confronted new realities.

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## **You're in Charge—Now What?**

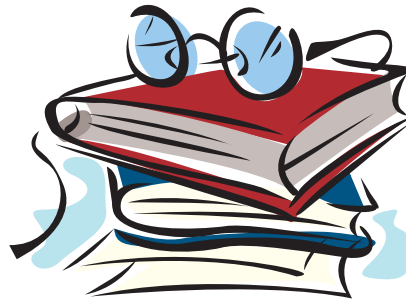
by Thomas J. Neff and James M. Citrin. New York: Crown Business ([www.randomhouse.com/crown/business](http://www.randomhouse.com/crown/business)), 2005. 296 pages, hardcover.

*You're in Charge* is written for the new organization leader; it provides a list of best-in-class examples of what some new leaders have done to get going in the organization and to make a difference. It is interesting to see that there are many different ways to go about getting started in a new job or with a promotion.

One hundred days has often been used as a timeframe to accomplish goals and the authors use this same timeframe as their foundation for long-term momentum and great performance. The first 100 days for every U.S. President is a popular measuring

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point that the news media likes to focus on. While the level of attention is not the same, a new corporate (or other) leader needs to get off to a good start and the 100-day timeframe seems to work. That does not mean that a leader actually has that much time; sometimes the bar is raised pretty high by the board or supervisor. The book contains examples of what new leaders did prior to entering their current organization. There are examples of trips made to investigate the competition or to find potential best practices; financial records being analyzed to find the weak spots; people posing as a customer to get a non-management perspective. Along with the authors' actionable eight-point plan that will be the foundation for your success, there is also a list of potential pitfalls, the top ten things

not to do; many helpful yet briefly described things to consider. There is no set path to success, i.e., step one, step two, step three, etc. The reader is free to mix, match, omit, or take an extra portion.

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Overall, I liked this book; it was an easy, pleasant read and provided me with verification of things I was already doing. It also provided me with warnings about acting too quickly or too slowly. Just because I found it pleasant doesn't mean it is a book that is devoid of valuable information to be referenced in the future; it's a good source for ideas and techniques which should remain useful in the future.

If you are new to a job or planning to make a move in the future, you should find this book useful. If you just want to make changes in the organization, it will also be helpful.

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## **Confronting Reality, Doing What Matters to Get Things Right,**

by Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan. Crown Business ([www.randomhouse.com/crown/business](http://www.randomhouse.com/crown/business)), New York: 2004. 260 pages, hardcover.

I purchased *Confronting Reality* with the plan of reading how some executives identified creative ways to redirect and refocus an organ-

ization. After reading the first two chapters I almost gave up on it because there were too many examples that looked like "Chainsaw" Al Dunlap-the notorious executive who out-sourced, sold-off, and eventually ruined Sunbeam. However, persistence rewarded me as I got past the first few cruel chapters.

The book returns to a more positive focus by presenting the basic business model-the balance of external realities, internal activities, and financial targets. Each of these areas has components that are adjusted or responded to through an iterative process. Examples are provided that show how an improvement process can begin by focusing on any one of the three tenets of the basic business model and how the other two change in response. Yes, there is the occasional table of numbers, but they are illustrative and not difficult to interpret. There are examples of what

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happens to those organizations that refuse to change or confront reality-the loss of market share, income, profit margin, and/or internal drive.

The book really got interesting when I got to the chapters "Looking Around Corners," "Getting Ready," and "Leading for Reality." There are some great

nuggets of information and processes that I am going to put into practice in the future; I just need time to do all the other things that fill the day.

While I did not like the first few chapters because they focused on outsourcing and elimination of non-core enterprises (an area that facilities departments sometimes fall under), I enjoyed the book and found a number of valuable ideas and examples that I can use. Many of the examples provided were not short-term or early activities which mean to me that this book provides good follow-up for those who have been in a leadership position for some time and are looking for new techniques for improvement. 🏢



## ***Energy Solutions Guaranteed Energy Savings***

*"The actual savings we realized during the construction period were greater than Tour Andover Controls had estimated. My impression is that this project has been approached as a team effort by my staff and their staff. The working relationships have been excellent."*

— Raymond E. McFarlane  
Director, Physical Plant and Facilities Planning  
University of North Texas

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