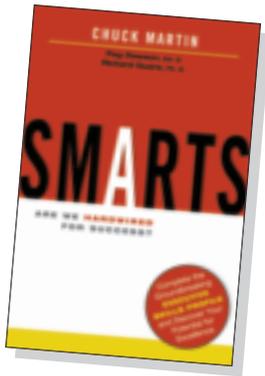


This month we look at two different, but valuable books for facility officers as we attempt to maximize both our human and physical resources. The first is a leadership development book reviewed by Suzanne Drew, staff development and management director at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, who is now eager to apply the concepts covered. While studying to become LEED-AP, Ted Weidner reviewed a book on sustainability.



**SMARTS: Are We Hardwired for Success?**, by Chuck Martin, Peg Dawson, and Richard Guare, AMACOM, New York, 2007, 240 pages, hardcover, \$21.95.

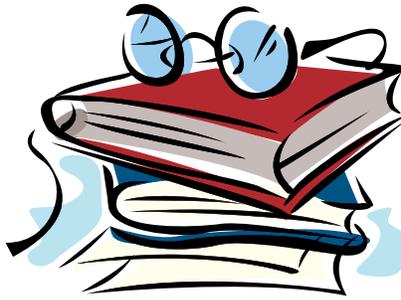
*Reviewed by Suzanne Drew*

## Executive skills,

as referenced throughout Chuck Martin's *SMARTS*, do not describe skills used specifically by senior managers,

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*Suzanne Drew is the director of staff development and management at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She can be reached at [sdrew2@unl.edu](mailto:sdrew2@unl.edu). Ted Weidner is assistant vice chancellor of facilities management & planning at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and president of Facility Asset Consulting. He can be reached at [tweidner@unl.edu](mailto:tweidner@unl.edu).*



The authors... suggest that rather than trying to improve those least developed skills, we should focus instead on developing accommodation strategies to help us work around our shortcomings....

but is a phrase borrowed from the neurosciences to refer to how we regulate our behaviors and speech.

This book discusses 12 such skills and provides a variety of practical ideas to help us identify, maximize, and accommodate differing abilities in these areas. The skills include:

1. the ability to think before you speak
2. working memory
3. emotion control
4. the capacity to maintain attention in spite of distractions
5. the ability to act without undue procrastination
6. planning and prioritization
7. organization
8. time management
9. defining and achieving goals
10. flexibility
11. the capacity to take an unbiased view of oneself
12. stress tolerance

While we regularly employ all of these skills, we are significantly better at two or three of them.

These strengths we generally do without effort and often expect others to perform as easily. However, because some of the skills offset each other, we also have two or three that are less developed than the others and these are the ones that are likely to get us into trouble from time to time.

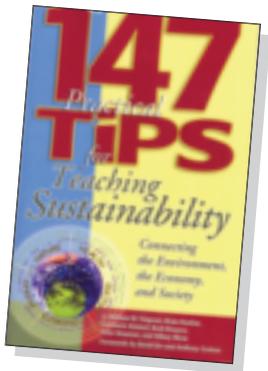
The authors advise that these capacities are generally fixed by young adulthood and there is little room after that for material improvement regardless of individual commitment to change or managerial intervention. Thus, they suggest that rather than trying to improve those least developed skills, we should focus instead on developing accommodation strategies to help us work around our shortcomings and recovery plans for dealing with the fall out that they are likely to cause. Practical tools for effectively managing these skills include:

- simple questionnaires to identify the relative strengths of your executive skills, as well as the strengths of those around you
- lists of common behaviors associated with strong and weak manifestations of each skill
- detailed descriptions of the environments, tasks, and projects best suited for each

There are descriptions of how lesser developed skill sets may be misconstrued by others and a list of tactics to help minimize or at least address the often-resulting problems or conflicts. Also included are interview questions to identify the degree of development of applicants' executive skills as well as tools to assess the skill mix required for any given assignment.

Given this framework, it becomes possible, if not likely, that many of the employees we perceive on the

job as having poor motivation and communication skills may in fact be highly motivated and capable and just as frustrated and confounded with the situation as we are. With this resource, we have opportunity to revisit these situations with new understanding and tools so that we can work together to understand and address, once and for all, the real and perhaps underlying issues.



**147 Practical Tips for Teaching Sustainability; Connecting the Environment, the Economy, and Society**, by William M. Timpson, et al., Atwood Publishing, Madison, WI, 2006, 119 pages, paperback, \$12.50.

Reviewed by Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA

**Colleagues at** Colorado State University and elsewhere (plus 57 others identified in the acknowledgements) collaborated to write *147 Tips*. Weaving the work of six authors together can lead to a disjointed product but that is not the case here. The format of the book, while deliberately choppy, is organized into 17 sections that allow the user/reader to gather five or more useful tips or ideals that teach and demonstrate the importance of a sustainable approach to what we do.

Early in the book, facilities are identified as major consumers of national resources. Rather than making a big deal of the consumption statistics the tips begin immediately. Some of the tips are familiar to read-

ers of APPA publications. Others are more focused on educational factors. There are exercises student teams can follow to gain an understanding of sustainability that may have limited value to a facility officer. Occasionally, the supporting material for each tip may be recycled from a previous tip. Overall, the approach is good and reader-friendly.

In a student-centered environment we are often pressed by bright and active student groups to do more to protect the environment and our collective future. Sometimes, the student groups are more enthusiastic than practical, other times they are too idealistic. While many of the tips lean in these directions, they also provide some great reference for sustainability approaches, tools, and devices. Facility officers can use the tips to illustrate to students how they are already working toward a more sustainable campus, because we're all

familiar with limited resources and the need for creative solutions. When faced with a new challenge, the tips provide some creative ideas.

This is a nice reference for every facility officer. It is inexpensive, provides plenty of good ideas and helpful references, and it offers a perspective different from our normal view, which will help address student (and faculty) concerns with campus operations. If you get the book but don't agree, be sure to pass it on to some who will want it (reuse). If you aren't interested, don't get the book (reduce). And if you like the subject, use the book over and over again (recycle). 📖

## Excellence...not an act, but a habit.

Aristotle

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