

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

Two books that are mostly about management are reviewed this month. Whether you come from the technical side of facilities operations or the business side, you've got to deal with management (up or down). As such, consider both of these books based on the reviews below.

**RETHINKING RISK: HOW COMPANIES SABOTAGE THEMSELVES AND WHAT THEY MUST DO DIFFERENTLY**

Joseph W. Koletar, AMACOM, New York, NY, 2010, 229 pages, hardcover, \$29.95.

As facility managers we manage risk on a daily basis. Sometimes it is financial risk or physical risks. In almost all cases, these become risks associated with people—people who choose to ignore safety procedures, have personal financial needs (and poor judgment), or who choose to ignore conditions on campus. *Rethinking Risk* focuses, in many cases, on the financial risks but does a fairly good job of looking at the other risks, those that are more often in the facilities realm.

When I started my career in facilities I often thought that auditors were the enemy; best avoided—and if necessary—best battled for their lack of understanding of my work. Either experience or age has taught me that auditors are really there to help; they identify potential risks and suggest ways to reduce the risk. *Rethinking Risk* is a friendly discussion about the experiences of the individuals or companies who didn't think about the risks in their business, or elected to believe the risk was limited.

You might think this book is for a financial person, not you. That's understandable, unless you consider what has happened in higher education over the years. This is one of the most highly regulated industries in the



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U.S. With regulation comes the risk of not knowing what the regulations are, or where the potential problems are. As an example, since 1973 it's been illegal to post student grades for privacy reasons. I recall warning a dean in 1998 of this problem at one campus and the grade sheets eventually came down. But what about the grades in the trash; how private are they? What is the risk of someone going through the building dumpster and getting private student information, or the answers to an upcoming test? Is the facility officer to blame if someone got this information out of the trash? What about managing regulated materials on campus? Do you have determined faculty or students who have a habit of doing building

modifications on their own because the facilities staff is too expensive? What are the institutional risks? The good and bad features of this book are that it increased my sensitivity to the risks of my job: frightening!

It's not pretty, but risk is everywhere. My boss just asked the question, "What risks keep me up at night and what am I doing about them?" My preferred solution is a glass of warm milk and a boring book, but that's not a good answer. Even more concerning are the risks that aren't known or obvious. Sadly, too many campuses have learned that individuals can get their hands on weapons and move around campus hurting their fellow students, faculty, and staff. Can these unknown risks be mitigated?

I'd be foolish to believe that any book would have all the answers, and wrong to say this book has answers about eliminating campus risks. What it does well, is to enlighten the reader about the places risks can exist and techniques that are used to identify and mitigate risk. Don't assume that risk is your boss's problem—risk is everyone's problem. As a facility officer with the ability to address many problems on a daily basis, you'll be well served to take a look at *Rethinking Risk*.

**MANAGEMENT? IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK!**

Henry Mintzberg, Bruce Ahlstrand, and Joseph Lampel, AMACOM, New York, NY, 2010, 126 pages, hardcover, \$22.

Bring together three professors of management to write a book, and the first expectation is a list of the latest tools and techniques to manage an organization better. While that might be the case in many other books, it's not the case here.

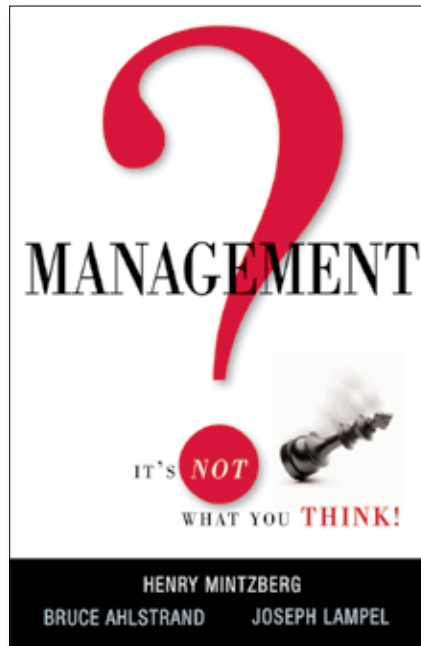
*Management?* starts off dryly enough with an analysis of different styles or

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descriptions of management. Okay, that's nice. Conductor, superman, creator, "synergizer," inspiration, etc.—all descriptions of what a manager and leader might be. The authors present the traditional organization chart as a mislabeled artifact. Instead, they believe the organization is really based on doers, and the non-doers who happen to be the bosses. Interesting (or maybe irreverent.)

Think back several years (to APPA 1996 when Scott Adams, the creator of *Dilbert*) spoke in Salt Lake City. Most of us like *Dilbert* because his situations remind us so much of our own jobs (we also don't want to be compared to the pointy-haired boss.) As I kept reading *Management?* I got to thinking more about *Dilbert*. Which is to say that *Management?* is more like an educated version of *Dilbert*. There are some great examples of "management for the sake of management" rather than for the benefit of business. And that seems to be the real theme of the book. Why are we managing based on some faddish theory instead of using some common sense? The authors appear to get a little irreverent when looking at the successes of alumni from one of the great MBA colleges in the U.S. And rightly so; these "magnates of industry" really made a mess of things.

The more logical management organizations presented are those where the leader listens, or where there are multiple leaders in the workforce. The creative frontline employees might pitch an idea for the organization. And when they win the support of peers and the leader, they make the organization more successful and the leader gets support by being



supportive. It's sort of a grassroots system without really calling it that. From personal experience, I find greater enjoyment in working within an organization where the bosses listen to ideas (good and bad,) and then supports (and congratulates) a successful idea that helps the entire organization—not his or her bonus. *Dilbert* longs for such an organization.

While I was apprehensive at first, I enjoyed this book and the examples of both good and bad management techniques and systems. I also enjoyed the anti-MBA focus probably because of my *Dilbert* leanings. If you're looking for a short, informative, and thoughtful book on management, I recommend *Management?* \$

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