

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

Congratulations to Fred Gratto, assistant director of grounds at the University of Florida, for sharing some of his leadership techniques as an author. It's a big job to write a book while working a regular day job. I'm happy to have it included in this month's Bookshelf alongside three more prominent authors of leadership advice.

13 THINGS ROCK & ROLL CAN DO FOR YOU ... ADVICE FOR LEADERS AND EVERYONE ELSE: AT HOME & AT WORK

Frederic Gratto, Telemachus Press, 2011, 166 pages, softcover.

There were several quotes that come to mind when reading *13 Things That Rock & Roll Can Do For You*. They included: "No one ever said on their deathbed, 'I wish I'd spent more time at the office';" "stop and smell the roses;" and "there's more to life than just being alive." The book is full of reminiscences of life, growing up, and music mostly from the 1960s. They play well off each other and provide a refreshing perspective on life.

Those of us who grew up in the '60s, the boomers born in the '50s, as well as those from the mid-'70s will remember the music fondly. The music from that era was a combination of poetry, prose, melody, and tempo, generally focused on life and love. Some were songs of hardship, but most were reflective of the changing times, coping, and dreams of a better life. Taken as a group, which the author does well, they provide a philosophical approach to life.

The *13 Things* are presented one chapter at a time. The author's life experiences are interlaced with references to rock and roll songs. While this may seem to be a simplistic approach, I found it interesting and enjoyable. Of course, as a child of the era, I also found myself

remembering the music of my youth, what I was doing, and how the music affected me then, and now.

While you may not agree with the technique, or be familiar with the music, the overall message is still the same. Maintain a perspective on your life, balance work and play, family is important, don't sweat the small stuff, and so on. I recommend *13 Things* when you're in need of adult reflection but still can't leave your youth.

THE NEW LEADER'S 100-DAY ACTION PLAN: HOW TO TAKE CHARGE, BUILD YOUR TEAM, AND GET IMMEDIATE RESULTS, 3RD ED.

George B. Brandt, Jayme A. Check, and Jorge E. Pedraza, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey, 2011, hardcover \$26.95, e-book \$11.69.

I've selected this book for selfish reasons. I'm hiring a new person for my organization, an important position that must deal with strong-willed employees, difficult customers, important contractors, and some somewhat complex policies. My goal is to have this new person start off on the right foot and succeed where previous people have struggled. While I believe I have "hired right," it's also important that I do my part to ensure success.

The New Leader's 100-Day Action Plan is focused on what the new leader must do to put his or her agenda in order, get the right people on the team, and start making things happen. The book starts with pursuit of the job – choosing the right job – to help ensure success. The clues to choosing the right job are:

- finding out details of the skills required
- finding out what about the job is compelling



- reading the culture in advance (that is, the work environment, not the office décor) to determine if your work style is compatible.

There are also three questions that must be answered in the interview (strengths, motivation, and fit.) From my perspective, as the hiring component, does the prospective employee answer the three questions well?

Then the 100-Day honeymoon begins. A good honeymoon ends with a successful working relationship, and a bad one means a new job search. Are the employees accepting of change? Does the organization need to change or is it successful? A leader who starts a new job and tries to change the organization against its will, will not be as successful as desired, and might face bigger problems. However, an organization ready to change (for survival or other reason) will improve with the right leadership. Assessing the environment and assimilating into it is essential. In my case, helping with the environmental factors and assimilation will help increase the likelihood of success.

Whether you want to read the *100-Day Action Plan* as a job searcher (the primary reason for the book) or as an employee searcher (my reason), you'll find it an informative and supportive book that will help you grow and succeed. ☎

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