

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

There is usually a bit of luck when it comes to the timing of some of the books I have found to review. This month I have two very timely books for consideration. The COVID-19 pandemic has upended the way we think about buildings and the involvement of facility officers in the normal operation of any organization. The two books presented in this issue should have some immediate relevance, even if you can't implement everything they recommend right now. I encourage you to find the time to read them.

THE ART OF BEING INDISPENSABLE AT WORK: WIN INFLUENCE, BEAT OVERCOMMITMENT, AND GET THE RIGHT THINGS DONE

Bruce Tulgan, Harvard Business Review Press, 2020, 163 pp., hardcover (\$20), Kindle (\$15).

A good person is hard to find but a good person is not necessarily the best person. Many good people remain good and don't become the best they can be, because they may not realize how to move to a position of greatness. In *The Art of Being Indispensable at Work*, Bruce Tulgan shares the advice he gives to those who are trying to become not only better, but indispensable in their workplace.

Being indispensable doesn't mean doing everything—that's a sure-fire way to end up getting overwhelmed, overcommitted, and overconfident. These situations result in losing value for the organization because your work becomes sloppy, late, or inaccurate. What's a good person supposed to do? Tulgan spells out the solution in eight easy-to-read chapters. Five of these chapters describe the action steps needed, while the other chapters provide the motivation and summary.

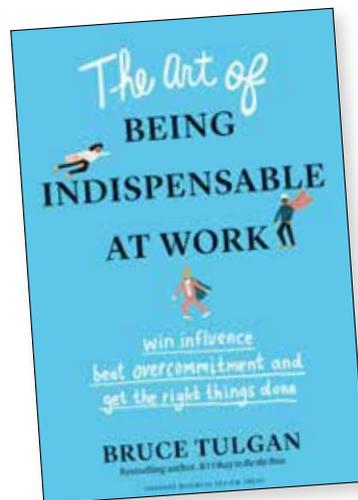
Being Indispensable deals with the intersection of two groups: The first group comprises your boss and your subordinates; the second group is your peers. Both groups must be managed in a way that respects position but also creates opportunities. Like other self-improvement publications do, this book stresses the necessity of aligning oneself with others in the workplace. There are technical ways to do this through strategic planning processes, but accomplishing this at a personal level requires managing

personality factors. There are other books that cover how to manage one's boss; this book focuses on feedback rather than influence—the influence is derived from the feedback.

Controlling what one works on is another important factor in becoming your best. Too many good workers reply with “yes, I'll do it,” when they are already busy or not the best person for the task, just because they think being available to do more work increases their value in the organization. They're frequently wrong. In order to avoid getting into this trap—and to become indispensable—it's essential to learn how to say “no.” Similarly, saying “yes” requires some thought and finesse.

The ability to delegate work intelligently is another important characteristic of indispensable employees. Identifying others—or developing others—who can get work done is essential. Developing a plan that

results in completing a task rather than having it “almost” completed increases indispensability. Finally, developing one's ability to collaborate with others improves the work environment and increases opportunities for others to contribute, in turn increasing productivity. Many of these characteristics are addressed conceptually in Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and in Robert Fulghum's *All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.



HEALTHY BUILDINGS: HOW INDOOR SPACES DRIVE PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Joseph G. Allen and John D. Macomber, Harvard University Press, 2020, 278 pp., hardcover and e-book (\$35).

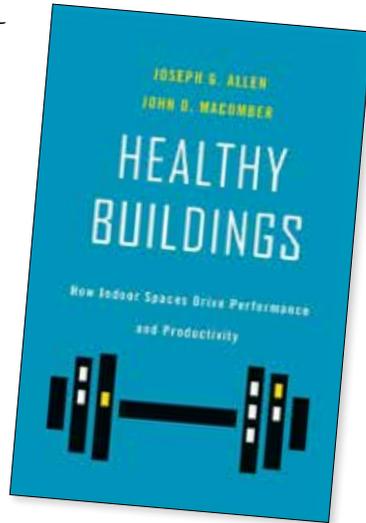
Facility officers recognize the inherent value of having well-maintained buildings to serve their constituents, but don't always have enough skills to make the arguments for keeping them that way or to tackle their maintenance problems without appearing to be doing capital renewal for renewal's sake. *Healthy Buildings* provides much of the missing support.

Even though I firmly believe that education is not about buildings, but about the programs inside them, it's still necessary to recognize that little happens outside the buildings. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says that humans spend 90 percent of their time in buildings. The benefits of fresh air, sunshine, and the natural environment we enjoy when outside are thus crammed into the other 10 percent unless something else happens.

That's where *Healthy Buildings* comes in. Many mistakes were made in building design in the 1980s in response to the need for energy conservation. Changes in building codes since then have identified many necessary corrections, but the supporting rationale and business arguments for those corrections are not well described in the codes. Our measurements of building efficiency and effectiveness fall into typical engineering measures, operating cost per square foot, return on investment, and so on. These measures frequently omit the human factors that need to be accounted for.

The facility management business is about serving the demand organization and responding to the productivity and performance expectations the organization has for the people working in the facilities. Other than techniques for managing people, which are limited to the facilities staff, facility managers seldom understand how to leverage their position to provide a better working environment for the people inside the buildings.

Written from a public health and business perspective, *Healthy Buildings* helps make the argument for improving the workspace. It also helps one develop the measures for healthier buildings. Although



they are a little perfunctory, the authors describe an HPI (health performance indicator), rather than the more familiar KPI (key performance indicator). Measurement is essential, and using a more meaningful measure to catch the attention of stakeholders, or convey a message, is valuable. Also needed are the basic metrics that feed into an HPI; the authors also describe the factors that provide the foundation for conveying the message you want to get across.

As a member of an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) facilities management committee looking at a standard to influence behaviors of people in buildings, I see a direct tie between *Healthy Buildings* and ISO 41001 ("Facility Management – Management Systems – Requirements with Guidance For Use"). Similarly, as I watch facility organizations battle with COVID-19 and demands to make facilities available while reducing vectors for disease transmission, I find the publication of this book to be extremely fortuitous. ☺

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