

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

There is a little of the entrepreneur or leader in every facilities officer. Think about your job and the ways you daily figure out how to “MacGyver” something so that the campus will continue to operate and service the faculty, staff, and students. It’s a tough job, requiring nerves of steel, creativity, and resourcefulness. In this issue, I have the pleasure to present one leader’s opinion, Penn State’s Beth Clark, of a leadership book, in addition to my opinion of an entrepreneurship book.

Remember, you too may present your opinions of a book that will provide value to your facilities colleagues. I’m always looking for contributors.

THE INNOVATION STACK: BUILDING AN UNBEATABLE BUSINESS ONE CRAZY IDEA AT A TIME

Jim McKelvey, 2020, 261 pp., hardcover (\$17.31), ebook (\$13.99), audiobook, (\$17.15)

Reviewed by Ted Weidner, Purdue University

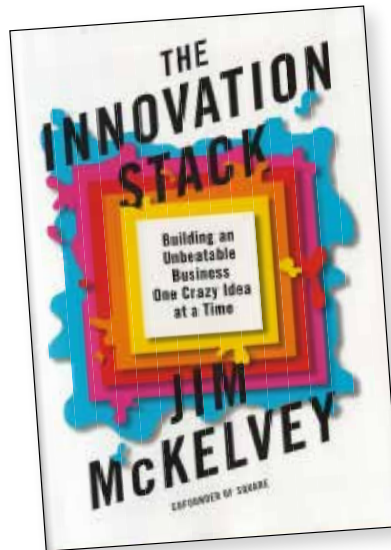
There’s a little of the entrepreneur in every facilities officer, but we’re often constricted by the reality and risk of entrepreneurship. Not many of us have the ability or nerve to risk becoming an entrepreneur even if we can find the opportunity to do it. Some of the fear may be related to figuring out how to become an entrepreneur or how to find the opportunity. Obviously, there are a lot of barriers. *The Innovation Stack*, by Jim McKelvey, provides an interesting and compelling insight into the creation process.

We manage risks every day. They are risks associated with a small number of factors: cost, operation, safety, efficiency, longevity, etc. We are usually able to manage four or five factors, while we often feel willing to ignore a couple of factors to make a problem slightly easier to solve. However, when one solution creates new problems (or risks), it starts to become intimidating and entrepreneurship goes out the door. However, considering McKelvey’s *Innovation Stack* approach, one sees how it’s sometimes necessary to keep plugging away at

the bigger problem and recognizing that part of the challenge is a “whack-a-mole” issue. The good news is that the moles are limited.

Some solutions employ copies (but only partial copies), some require a little luck, and others require gritty determination. Regardless, there are solutions we can discover by looking at problems in a different way and being determined (and by sometimes being willing to forgo some comforts). *Innovation Stack* demonstrates to me that solutions exist, creativity is important, and process focus is essential. This is not a cookbook approach to entrepreneurship; it is a rough guide to the kinds of problems to expect and the benefits associated with the hard work needed to find the solutions.

This heavily footnoted book provides the reader with important ideas and approaches. I plan to reread it periodically, whenever I need a refresher to tackle challenging problems or opportunities.



THE COIN: A JOURNEY TO DISCOVER WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAD

Justin Mears, LeadOff Publishing, Greenville, SC, 2019, 201 pp., paperback (\$14.99), ebook (\$9.99)

Reviewed by Beth Clark, Penn State University

Most books about leadership are written as academic texts. Individual concepts are each given a chapter with supporting terms, examples, and anecdotes used to demonstrate the concept and give readers a full understanding. Some leadership book authors are more successful than others in grabbing and (more importantly) holding the attention of their readers with this style. Others, well—no matter how important or groundbreaking the content, if the readers' attention cannot be captured, the best material is left to languish on unread pages.

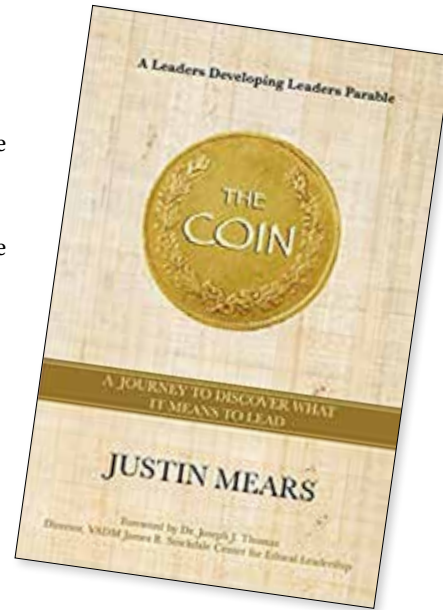
Then there is *The Coin* by Justin Mears. This first offering from Mears represents a lifelong passion for and interest in the intersection of leadership and character. Drawing from the author's personal interests in history and sports, the book is written as a parable.

Rather than follow the typical academic format, Mears opts to present a number of progressive leadership topics through the fictional tale of Joey, a rising star in an organization who has been tasked with leading an interdepartmental team of 12 to tackle one of the most pressing issues facing his company. Though he believes he is well positioned for the task, given his history of leadership roles and his success in business school and the workplace, Joey quickly finds out he has a lot to learn about what it means to lead "in the real world."

With the guidance of a mentor, Marcus, Joey learns about leadership concepts such as *purpose*, *commitment*, *failure*, *ownership*, and *character* through a variety of journeys back in time to see great examples of leadership and the associated

moments in history "in person." Among those visited include Abraham Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address, the World War II Battle off Samar, Coach Jimmy Valvano's "Cutting Down the Nets" speech, and J. K. Rowling's commencement address at Harvard.

APPA members who have completed Level 1 of the Leadership Academy will detect Stephen Covey's "7 Habits" concepts throughout Joey's story, and the argument can be made that the entire book reflects a "7 Habits" evolution of the main character. It could easily be supplemental reading material for the Leadership Academy and should be on the bookshelf of emerging leaders. As much as the book gets high marks for its readability, it likewise (if not more so) gets high marks for its relatability. ☺



Ted Weidner is an associate professor at Purdue University and consults on facilities management issues primarily for educational organizations. He can be reached at tjweidne@purdue.edu. If you would like to write a book review, please contact Ted directly.



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