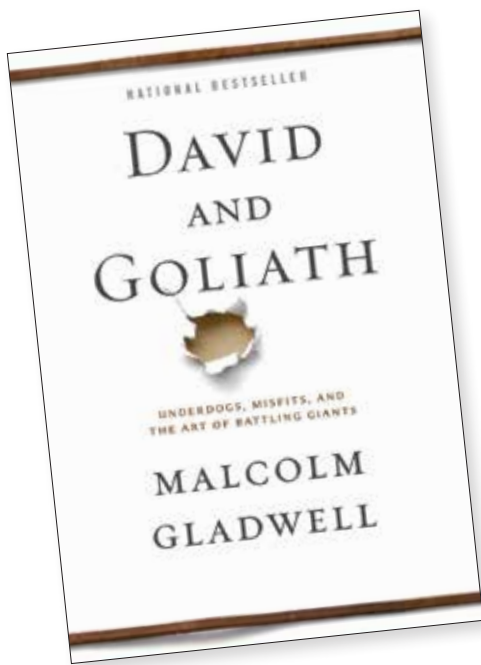


Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., CEFP, AIA

We've left the old year behind, and now look to the new.

Included with leaving the old is also leaving behind old ideas, and old ways of looking at things. It's therefore fitting to discuss two books that examine new (or different) ideas and ways of looking at things. Get ready for the New Year, and grab these books.



DAVID AND GOLIATH: UNDERDOGS, MISFITS, AND THE ART OF BATTLING GIANTS

Malcolm Gladwell, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 2013, 321 pp., hardcover \$29, softcover, \$14.99 Kindle.

Malcolm Gladwell has developed a habit of writing about people who do things differently and succeed. Books such as *Outliers* and *Blink* have been reviewed here previously, and Gladwell's ability to look things in unique ways and to describe them clearly comes through again.

In *David and Goliath*, Gladwell looks at the actions of various underdogs who have beaten the odds and succeeded by tackling a problem or situation using unconventional techniques. In the

case of David, a Jewish shepherd boy who volunteered to take on the Philistine giant Goliath, the unconventional technique was to appear defenseless and use a weapon that was not a typical fighting technique to defeat the giant. Essentially, the giant was expecting to fight a relatively large and armed Jewish soldier. None were as large as Goliath, which meant that the Hebrews would be defeated and become enslaved. David, who was a small and lowly shepherd, volunteered and fooled Goliath by attacking him with a sling and five stones. Gladwell identifies several mitigating factors that allowed David's approach to succeed.

Using the David and Goliath story as an introduction to several other stories about unconventional methods to overcome adversity provides an interesting theme. Some of the stories are disturbing and help explain some recent history, editorials, and news reporting by discussing some under-reported information.

But what's the big picture and why did Gladwell bother, again, to look at things differently? A lot of it has to do with problem dissection and selection of a solution in one's comfort zone. In hindsight, it's arguable that Gladwell only selected the problem/solution pairs where the winner got lucky (or had God on their side).

There are certainly many stories where an unconventional approach didn't succeed. Also, in the David and Goliath story, there's a lot of new information provided that David wouldn't

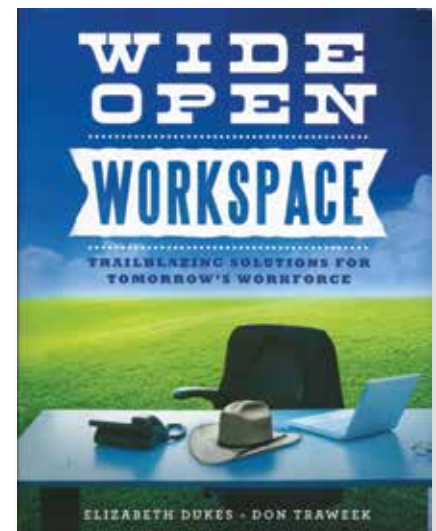
have had available in his decision-making process. I'd argue that identification of the problem is the first essential step, and that once having clearly defined the problem, any (although in these examples unusual) solution will work.

David and Goliath, like Gladwell's other work, is a pleasant read. He writes well, frames complex issues clearly, and provides a compelling message. But the take-away is that successful outcomes don't always come from solutions that we're accustomed to and comfortable with. Successful outcomes are the result of thinking through the problem and applying a solution with skill.

WIDE OPEN WORKSPACE: TRAILBLAZING SOLUTIONS FOR TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

Elizabeth Dukes and Don Traweck, WCT Publishing, Seabrook, TX, 2014, 138 pp., hardcover \$22.95.

The work world is changing. If you haven't seen it yet, you will. Consultants work out of Starbucks, poets work out of Panera, and other mobile workers do their work in other



transient locations. The meaning of a workplace is changing from a where employees do their job to where disparate people do a variety of things. I've observed it myself in an academic setting, where students don't study or do their work in a dorm or library, but instead do so just about anywhere on campus. Graduate students don't do their research in their assigned lab station unless that's where the experiment is. Students are choosing where to work; they're mobile by choice, not necessity. As facility officers we need to pay attention, because they are the next generation of workers.

So what does this mean for facility managers? Will we provide services to a fixed group of people who show up every day to do a particular job, or will start providing "hoteling" solutions, and

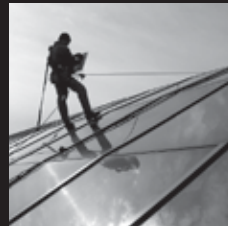
what are the implications of doing so? That answer, presented in *Wide Open Workspace* is upbeat and based on eight cowboy codes. I won't list them in detail but they include the terms: "new trails," "get together," "share," and "brand." Whether the eight codes identified by the authors represent an inclusive list of how cowboys did their job, and how the next generations of workers will do theirs, is immaterial. They frame the argument of mobility based on success.

While the ideas are sound, the arguments reasonable, and the delivery is satisfactory, there are extensive references to the services delivered by the author's company, iOffice, and with a clear Texas bias. However, once you get past the appearance of commercialism, and accept the heavy "Made in Texas" references, the message in the book is clear and

important for facility officers to hear and understand.

While it's entirely possible your institution won't be implementing "hot desks" for faculty or staff anytime soon, students are creating their own, and it will become an issue in the future. Buildings stand for multiple generations of workers, so it's important for facility officers to become aware of these issues. To this end, *Wide Open Workspaces* does a good job of describing the issues and challenges coming our way. ☛

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