

Managers are bombarded with advice from consultants, professors, business journalists, and assorted management “gurus” on how to manage their employees. A lot of this advice is well thought-out and valuable. Much of it, however, is a gross generalization, ambiguous, inconsistent, or superficial. Some of it is even just downright wrong. Regardless of the quality, there doesn’t seem to be a slowdown in the outpouring of this advice. Quite to the contrary. Books on business and management have replaced sex, self-help, and weight loss as topics on many nonfiction best-sellers lists.

I’ve been teaching and writing about managing people at work for more than 35 years. As part of my writing efforts, I have read upward of 25,000 research studies on human behavior. While my practitioner friends are often quick to criticize research and theory-testing, this research has provided innumerable insights into human behavior. Unfortunately, to date there has been no short, concise summary of behavioral research that cuts through the jargon to give managers the truth about what works and doesn’t work when it comes to managing people at work. Well, this is no longer true. This book has been written to fill that void.

I’ve organized this book around key human-behavior-related problem areas that managers face: hiring, motivation, leadership, communication, team building, managing conflicts, designing jobs, performance evaluations, and coping with change. Within each problem area, I’ve identified a select set of topics that are relevant to managers and where there is substantial research evidence to draw upon. In addition, I’ve included suggestions to help you apply this information to improve your managerial effectiveness. And at the back of the book, I’ve listed references upon which the chapters are based.

Who was this book written for? Practicing managers and those aspiring to a management position—from CEOs to supervisor wannabes. I wrote it because I believe you shouldn’t have to read through detailed textbooks in human resources or organizational behavior to learn the truth about managing people at work. Nor should you have to attend an executive development course at a

prestigious university to get the straight facts. What you get from this book, of course, will depend on your current knowledge about organizational behavior. Recent MBAs, for instance, will find this book to be a concise summary of the evidence they spent many months studying. They won't see elaborated theories or names of major researchers, but they will find accurate translations of research findings. For individuals who haven't kept current with research in organizational behavior or for those with little formal academic training, this book should provide a wealth of new insights into managing people at work.

Each of the 53 topics in this book is given its own short chapter. And each chapter is essentially independent from the others. You can read them in any order you desire. Best of all, you needn't tackle this book in one sitting. It's been designed for multiple "quick reads." Read a few chapters, put it down, and then pick it up again at a later date. No continuous story line has to be maintained.

Let me conclude this preface by stating the obvious: A book is a team project. While there is only one name on the cover, a number of people contributed to getting this book in your hands. That team included Tim Moore, Jennifer Simon, Lori Lyons, Karen Gill, San Dee Phillips, and Gloria Schurick.

—Stephen P. Robbins

