

Leadership Without Easy Answers

By Ronald A. Heifetz

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The economy uncertain, education in decline, cities under siege, crime and poverty spiraling upward, international relations roiling: we look to leaders for solutions, and when they don't deliver, we simply add their failure to our list of woes. In doing do, we do them and ourselves a grave disservice. We are indeed facing an unprecedented crisis of leadership, Ronald Heifetz avows, but it stems as much from our demands and expectations as from any leader's inability to meet them. His book gets at both of these problems, offering a practical approach to leadership for those who lead as well as those who look to them for answers. Fitting the theory and practice of leadership to our extraordinary times, the book promotes a new social contract, a revitalization of our civic life just when we most need it.

Drawing on a dozen years of research among managers, officers, and politicians in the public realm and the private sector, among the nonprofits, and in teaching, Heifetz presents clear, concrete prescriptions for anyone who needs to take the lead in almost any situation, under almost any organizational conditions, no matter who is in charge, His strategy applies not only to people at the top but also to those who must lead without authority--activists as well as presidents, managers as well as workers on the front line.

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Leadership Without Easy Answers By Ronald A. Heifetz Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #31716 in Books
- Brand: Belknap Press
- Published on: 1998-07-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x .88" w x 6.13" l, 1.38 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 348 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal
Heifetz (Kennedy Sch. of Government, Harvard Univ.) presents a new theory of leadership for both public and private leaders in tackling complex contemporary problems. Central to his theory is the distinction between routine technical problems, which can be solved through expertise, and adaptive problems, such as crime, poverty, and educational reform, which require innovative approaches, including consideration of values. Four major strategies of leadership are identified: to approach problems as adaptive challenges by diagnosing the situation in light of the values involved and avoiding authoritative solutions, to regulate the level of stress caused by confronting issues, to focus on relevant issues, and to shift responsibility for problems from the leader to all the primary stakeholders. The theory is applied to an analysis of historical accounts of local, national, and international events. An innovative and thoroughgoing work; highly recommmended for graduate and undergraduate collections.
Jane M. Kathman, Coll. of St. Benedict Lib., St. Joseph, Minn.
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Review
Leadership Without Easy Answers is a masterwork of great subtlety, and of punch and practicality. Leadership is not value-free, Mr. Heifetz writes...[The author puts] soul and values squarely back into a vital topic, leadership. (Tom Peters *New York Times Book Review*)

Ronald Heifetz brings knowledge of an astonishingly wide range of disciplines to this study of leadership...As a musician, a cellist, he understands that the quality of a performance depends on the audience as well as on the instrumentalist...As a psychiatrist, Heifetz understands that communities cannot be pushed beyond their capacity to adapt...These insights give to Heifetz's book an originality and vivacity one rarely associates with studies on leadership. He illustrates his theses with an extraordinary range of cases and examples...*Leadership Without Easy Answers* reminds us of democracy's rich potential. It is a bold book and an encouraging one. I hope some of our leaders are out there learning. (Shirley Williams *Times Higher Education Supplement*)

This pioneering study constitutes one of the most insightful and innovative approaches to leadership studies in over a decade...Heifetz masterfully presents his new leadership model by intertwining general theory and prescriptive practical guidance through fertile historical and work-place case studies. Heifetz's goal is nothing less than a summoning for a new social contract that seeks to revitalize America's civic ethos by adopting leadership strategies to empower the citizenry rather than to merely enhance the authority of the leader...The upshot of this study should place it in the front line in leadership historiography for years to come. (R. J. Lettieri *Choice*)

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Ronald Heifetz has written an interesting and timely book, in which he moves away from the idea of leaders as visionaries and saviors to stressing leadership as an activity as opposed to a position of authority or a set of personal charcateristics. (Robert Hooijberg *Journal of Leadership Studies*)

A superb book for any age, but particularly for our current one, where society is so desperately in need of its wisdom and expertise. *Leadership without Easy Answers* should be required reading for top managers in all sectors--private, public, and nonprofit. I hope it will also be widely read by the citizenry that is so much in need of an attitude shift on the nature of authority. This book is also very much about citizenship. (M. Scott Peck, Author of *The Road Less Traveled*)

Alive with insights, concepts, new ideas, just teeming with the kind of creative approach to the study of leadership that I and of course many others esteem. In a field in which there has been a great deal of repetitious work, Heifetz strikes out in ground-breaking directions. (James MacGregor Burns, Author of *Leadership*)

Remarkably thoughtful, provocative, and useful. This book will be seen as a major contribution that provides a rare interdisciplinary view of leadership in context. Leaders as well as serious students of the process of leadership and the development of leaders need to have this book on their shelves. (General Walter Ulmer, U. S. Army (Ret.), President and CEO, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, North Carolina)

Heifetz turns out to be one of the most thoughtful scholars on leadership. His direct and relevant concepts are pathbreaking. (James David Barber, Author of *Presidential Character*)

Original and penetrating in its analysis of leadership. This is an excellent book. Important and valuable. (John Gardner, former Secretary HEW, Founder of Common Cause)

Leadership without Easy Answers should go a long way toward clearing up many confusions about leadership. Long a master teacher of leaders, Heifetz's courses and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government have been standing-room only for years. Read this book and see why. (Peter Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline*)

From the Back Cover

The economy uncertain, education in decline, cities under siege, crime and poverty spiraling upward, international relations roiling: we look to leaders for solutions, and when they don't deliver, we simply add their failure to our list of woes. In doing so, we do them and ourselves a grave disservice. We are indeed facing an unprecedented crisis of leadership, Ronald Heifetz avows, but it stems as much from our demands and expectations as from any leader's inability to meet them. His book gets at both of these problems, offering a practical approach to leadership for those who lead as well as those who look to them for answers. Fitting the theory and practice of leadership to our extraordinary times, the book promotes a new social contract, a revitalization of our civic life just when we most desperately need it. Drawing on a dozen years of research among managers, officers, and politicians in the public realm and the private sector, among the nonprofits, and in teaching, Heifetz presents clear, concrete prescriptions for anyone who needs to take the lead in almost any situation, under almost any organizational conditions, no matter who's in charge. His strategy of leadership applies not only to people at the top but also to those who must lead without authority - activists as well as presidents, managers as well as workers on the frontline. Here are Lyndon Johnson, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mahatma Gandhi, in triumph and in tragedy. Here too are military officers and soldiers, doctors and patients, college students, and local civic groups. Sketched with precision, touched by empathy, and unfailingly interesting, this cast of characters brings Heifetz's theory to life, demonstratingwhat a practitioner can do - or avoid doing - to assume leadership in an age without easy answers.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kathleen Jones:

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Jackie Lund:

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Rod Reese:

What is your hobby? Have you heard this question when you got scholars? We believe that that issue was given by teacher to the students. Many kinds of hobby, Everyone has different hobby. And you also know that little person like reading or as looking at become their hobby. You need to know that reading is very important and also book as to be the thing. Book is important thing to provide you knowledge, except your teacher or lecturer. You find good news or update concerning something by book. Numerous books that can you decide to try be your object. One of them is actually Leadership Without Easy Answers.

Betty Bass:

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