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TITLE INFORMATION

LEADERSHIP

The Art of Inspiring People to Be Their Best

Craig B. Whelden and David A. Bramlett

New Insights Press (186 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

A retired Army major general distills lessons about leadership that he learned over the course of his decorated career.

Debut author Whelden has no shortage of experience as a boss. During a career that spanned half a century, he rose to the rank of major general in the Army, and was a member of the Senior Executive Service in the Marine Corps. In this brief reflection—well under 200 pages in length—he lucidly analyzes the principles that led to his success; he summarizes this analysis at the end of the book, under the heading “Whelden Philosophy of Command.” Over the course of the book, he covers a broad and familiar spectrum of topics, highlighting the nature and importance of personal character and effective communication, the delegation of responsibility, and the fundamental principles of risk management, among other concepts. In the well-populated genre of leadership books, it’s exceedingly difficult to explore new territory. However, the author does so by freely drawing upon his own truly remarkable experiences during the transformation of the military following the Vietnam War to the conclusion of the Cold War, and beyond. His professional background is uncommonly diverse; for example, he commanded an Army base in Germany, where he was responsible for thousands of civilian employees, including German nationals. Along with an insider’s peek into the U.S. military, Whelden provides intriguing running commentary on historical events, including the 9/11 attacks, during which he was serving as the deputy commander of the U.S. Army Pacific. His extraordinary career, and the high stakes of his military life, lend the book an authority that one often doesn’t find in leadership literature: “military leadership is different. It is about ensuring a nation’s survival, preventing its decline, or, worst case, its demise. It is about life and death.” The author’s unflinching pragmatism is also a distinguishing virtue of this work, as his goal is to guide readers, not mollify them: “Reach for the stars, but be mindful of the fact that not everyone can be #1.” Overall, Whelden’s life story is as inspiring as his counsel is instructive.

A straightforward and forthcoming guide to leadership that stands apart from others in its field.

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