

Bookshelf

Can chief executive officers of major corporations take on the great challenges of health care, unemployment, media regulation, and international trade? Leo Hindery thinks so. In *It Takes a*

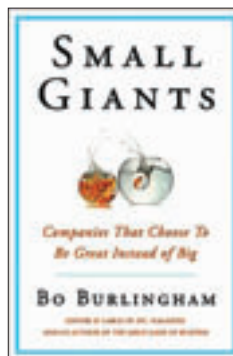


CEO, he lays out his premise that top executives need to take more responsibility for the world at large—in addition to taking more responsibility for any of their actions that have sweeping consequences. He writes, “The CEO’s job

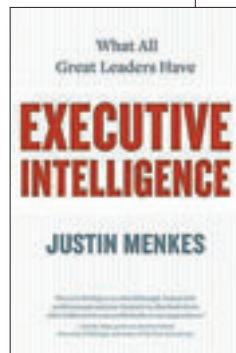
touches on three constituencies: employees, shareholders, and community. ... And when you get to the size of a Fortune 1000 company, your community is arguably the nation.” Using blunt language and naming names, Hindery decries lax behavior by CEOs—both those under indictment and those under the radar—and issues a call for higher ethical standards and more attention to improving the world. He lists the 19 characteristics any CEO should possess, including grace, courage, a sense of fair play, and a hatred of bigotry. Despite the truly alarming trends he spotlights, Hindery’s book is stirring and full of hope that corporate leaders can make a real difference in the world. (Free Press, \$24)

“Grow or die” is considered an indisputable maxim of business, but some entrepreneurs have rejected it as the governing system of their business careers. Instead, they focus on more intangible measures of success: an intimate relationship with customers, a happy and productive workforce, and personal satisfaction. In *Small Giants*, Bo Burlingham profiles 14

“companies that choose to be great instead of big.” Companies like Clif Bar, Anchor Brewing, Union Square Hospitality Group, and Righteous Babe Records have resisted the pressure to expand rapidly, offer IPOs, or generally take their companies to the much-vaunted “next level.” Instead, they’ve retained most of the control of their enterprises and found creative ways to grow their businesses. Burlingham’s book isn’t all happy endings and blissful contentment; most of the people he showcases have had to make hard decisions, and a few have tasted failure along the way. But the stories told and the lessons learned are valuable ones for anyone interested in starting a business and making it a success—by a personal definition. (Portfolio, \$24.95)



Like modern-day alchemists, today’s star executives take common, base elements and turn them into something wonderful and new. They’re not using magic, says Justin Menkes. They’re exhibiting *Executive Intelligence*, or a type of critical thinking that allows them to accomplish tasks, work closely with others, and adapt their own behavior as the situation demands. Menkes draws commentary from a wide variety of sources, ranging from psychologist Robert Sternberg to Avon CEO Andrea Jung, as he presents the hallmarks of brilliant executive leaders. A chapter late in the book offers a series of mock interview questions with executive candidates



and dissects which answers display executive intelligence and which do not. As Menkes and various other sources make clear, today’s successful corporation cannot survive by relying solely on the genius of one or two top individuals. Whole teams of gifted people are required to make an enterprise successful, and Menkes gives the blueprint for finding them. (Collins, \$27.95)

Are you the kind of leader who asks questions? If you are, do you even know what kinds of questions to ask? In *Leading with Questions*, Michael Marquardt describes how powerful it can be for a top executive to have an inquiring mind. In an environment that encourages questions, he notes, no one is afraid to confess concern about potential problems, and thus those problems don’t turn into disasters. No one is afraid to confess ignorance about a particular method, and thus everyone is continually allowed to learn.



“A questioning culture is a culture in which responsibility is shared. And when responsibility is shared, ideas are shared, problems are shared...and ownership of results is shared,” he writes. Marquardt knows that not everyone is comfortable posing questions, so he offers a primer on how to ask them, how to time them, how to listen to the answers, and how to follow up. He also provides lists of questions that can

be used in specific situations. What more could a reader ask? (Jossey-Bass, \$27.95)

■ **Finding a great employee is tough. Finding a great CEO is even tougher.** In *Finding the Best and the Brightest*, Pennsylvania State management professor Peg Thoms presents the best way to identify, recruit, and select candidates for top positions. It's



essential for those doing the hiring to thoughtfully outline what traits and skills they require in a specific position and then conduct a series of structured interviews with a small pool of candidates.

Thoms makes the point that there is no one leader who will be good in all situations, and she reiterates this by building the book around leadership vacancies in six organizations: a fishing club, a Fortune 500 company, a high school, a historical society, a Rust Belt city, and an urban hospital. While the president of the Sunshine Fishing Club will need to be honest, optimistic, friendly, and devoted to fishing, the historical society's director of PR must have high energy, excellent writing skills, and strong interpersonal skills. Thoms offers guidelines for conducting the interview—and for determining which candidates are the very best. (Praeger Publications, \$34.95)

■ **What would you do if you were braver?** That's one of the questions executive coach Graham Alexander has asked top CEOs

who were stressed, overworked, or feeling trapped in their current jobs. It's only one of dozens of questions that he poses throughout the slim, thought-provoking *Tales from the Top*, his account of more than 25 years of executive coaching. The book challenges CEOs to take hard looks at themselves, honestly evaluate what they have and what they want, and admit some of their deepest fears and insecurities. While many of his questions and suggestions are likely to induce some uncomfortable squirming for anyone who tries to answer or comply, the overall tone of the book is positive. Alexander believes any executive can improve his position—and his life—even if he has to make difficult choices to do so. (Nelson Business, \$22.99)



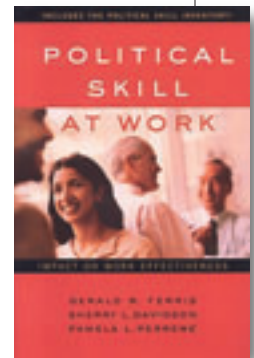
■ **If you've always wanted to sit down and hear great marketers and business gurus trade battle stories,** *The Big Moo* is for you. Seth Godin edits a collection of quick, provocative essays by 33 authors, including Tom Peters, Guy Kawasaki, Malcolm Gladwell, and Dan Pink. None of the contributions has a byline; each one needles the reader to think harder or think differently. One essay is nothing but questions: "What if we could charge ten times



as much for this? What if we had to charge one-tenth as much?" Another consists of an iconoclast's debate with nay-sayers: "They say I'm extreme. I say I'm a realist. ... They say, 'Improve and maintain.' I say,

'Destroy and reimagine.'" The title refers to Godin's earlier book, *Purple Cow*—the product or invention that sets a company apart. As he says in his introduction, "A big moo is the extreme purple cow, the remarkable innovation that completely changes the game." Spend some time with these authors, and you'll feel as if you can corral a whole herd. (Portfolio, \$19.95)

■ **"The work environments of today are ambiguous and subject to constant change,"** write Gerald R. Ferris, Sherry L. Davidson, and Pamela L. Perrewé in *Political Skill at Work*. These environments require "employees who are socially astute, flexible, adaptable and able to perform effectively through it all—that is, people who are politically skilled." Political skill is not the weaselly ability to manipulate people to achieve self-serving ends. Rather, they say, it is the ability to understand others and influence them in ways that benefit the organization.



Political skill comprises four key attributes: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. The authors—two business professors at Florida State University and one research scientist at New York University—explain how managers can cultivate political skill and how they can use it. Readers will quickly agree with the authors that "real political skill is a positive force." (Davis-Black Publishing, \$32.95) 