

# Bookshelf

## Everyday Heroes

Joseph L. Badaracco Jr.'s new book, *Leading Quietly*, is subtitled *An Unorthodox Guide to Doing the Right Thing*. This proves to be an apt title for an unusual book that follows ordinary people who negotiate the difficult and morally ambiguous territory of the modern workplace. Badaracco's main premise is that the high-profile heroism of whistle-blowers and ethical crusaders is misplaced—or certainly overvalued—in the real world, and that managers who deal carefully and efficiently with everyday problems practice an even more valuable brand of leadership.

Badaracco walks the reader through various situations that occurred to actual people and details the unsentimental and practical ways that they dealt with their problems. The new hospital CEO doesn't fire the high-ranking executive accused of sexual harassment; instead, she induces him to resign and take a generous severance package. The salesman trying to cut a deal with his best client figures out a way to work around company rules. The bank manager stalls with creative roadblocks when his superiors push him to clean house quickly at his new post, hoping to save the jobs of employees who might be worthwhile. None of these strategies is particularly heroic, Badaracco admits—but all of them help keep companies functioning smoothly while allowing middle managers and top executives to secure their jobs.

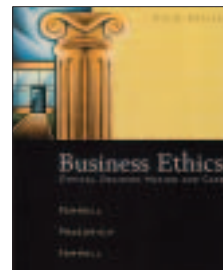
If the tactics are unglamorous, that's because Badaracco is a realist. He acknowledges that people's

motives are often mixed, even when they're doing a good deed like exposing a company's unethical practices. He notes that just knowing the difference between right and wrong is not enough to motivate most of us to act: "Before beginning the difficult effort to change the world, even in a small way, men and women must assess how much they care. ... The critical question is whether someone takes a problem personally enough to act, persist, endure, and soldier on." He explains how important it is for individual players to be able to assess their own political capital within an organization—and when they are wise to spend or hoard it.

The book is an interesting read, not just because its tenets and examples are so unexpected, but because Badaracco peppers the text with quotes from everyone from Machiavelli to Arthur Miller. And while some of his conclusions might be surprising, most of the dramas he recreates will be familiar to anyone who's ever held a managerial position—and wondered if he handled a sticky situation as well as he could have. If he acted behind the scenes with quiet determination, it's very possible that, by Badaracco's standards, he did. (Harvard Business Press, \$25.95)

## Ethical Dilemmas

Just as the Enron scandal has caused businesses large and small to re-examine their own ethical standards, Houghton Mifflin has helped business school professors to bring the topic into the classroom by issuing the fifth edition of *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases* by O.C. Ferrell, John Fraedrich, and Linda Ferrell. This detailed, dispassionate



look at what constitutes an ethical business climate is neither preachy nor judgmental.

It merely lays out situations that can cause trouble for organizations and encourages students, managers, and CEOs to think through the implications of their decisions.

The authors trace the history of the study of business ethics from the '60s through the early 21st century and note how changing consumer attitudes have affected social responsibility for corporations. They also discuss various types of moral codes and how they might be applied in personal and business situations. Each chapter begins and ends with a situation in which a manager or employee is faced with a difficult choice. No easy answers are given, but readers are left to ponder what the best decision might be and how various factors might influence that decision.

This thoughtful book does not boil down ethical situations to simple questions of right and wrong. "The study of business ethics does not mean simply moralizing about what should or should not be done in a particular situation," the authors write. "Rather, it systematically links the concepts of ethical responsibility and decision making within the organization. ... The current trend is away from legally based ethical initiatives in organizations to cultural or integrity-based initiatives that make ethics a part of core organizational values."

Readers who are business owners might want to consult the appendices, which contain the codes of ethics posted by real companies and organizations. The most comprehen-



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sive is from Lockheed Martin, which includes a section telling employees that they're on "thin ethical ice" when they hear sentences such as "No one will ever know" and "Shred that document." The volume is intended as a textbook, but it can serve as a primer for anyone in business who ever wondered whether he was always doing the right thing. (Houghton Mifflin, \$51.96)

### ■ **Modern Marketing**

In the early days of mass production, marketing entered "the age of reach," when companies concentrated on informing customers about the availability of their products. In the days of mass communication, marketing entered "the age of push," when companies fought to establish identity and engender in their consumers a desire for their specific brands. Today marketing is stepping into "The Age of Total Access," in which customers can find out about any product, at any time, from any place. Not only that, they can express their opinions about it and ask for customized modifications. Marketers haven't quite caught up with the possibilities of technology in this new, completely networked world, but they're going to have to figure out the parameters pretty soon.

So says Regis McKenna in *Total Access*, which looks at how technology is changing not only the retail experience but the entire process of communicating with customers. While wary of predicting exactly how commerce will change in the next 25 years, Regis believes "that marketing will become increasingly more integrated into the network. As a result, it will turn into a *direct* dialogue between the consumer and

the producer, and the producer will need to respond directly to the competitive demands of the marketplace." Companies must understand how consumers use technology and adapt that technology to satisfy customer demand.



Consumers aren't just connected through the Internet and their PCs. As McKenna says, mobile phones, ATMs, PDAs—even automobiles—have become devices for connectivity. Citing the global positioning satellites, CD technology, cell phone hookups, and flat screen televisions available in cars today, McKenna says, "the automobile is becoming a new form of medium." If customers can call up information even while they're driving to a vacation destination, and compare it to information available from limitless other sources, how can companies catch and hold their wandering, short attention?

It's a fascinating, dizzying look into the future of business—not an entirely reassuring view, perhaps, but one full of intriguing possibilities. (Harvard Business Press, \$27.50)

### ■ **The Law Is on Your Side**

Wrongful termination. Sexual harassment. Faulty products. All these and other situations can result in a lawsuit against a company. Managers coping with the everyday problems of running a business sometimes want to take care of the legal problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. Instead, argues George J. Siedel in *Using the Law for Competitive Advantage*, they should

analyze what these legal situations say about customer dissatisfaction or worker unrest and devise solutions that improve productivity, customer relations, and business strategy.

Siedel outlines a four-step Manager's Legal Plan that can help executives "not only better defend against costly and wasteful litigation but can actually turn your legal resources into competitive advantages." The four basic parts are: understand the law; react to legal problems through fight or flight; develop business strategies to prevent legal problems; and learn to reframe legal concerns as business concerns. He applies these four components to everything from workers' compensation claims to environmental litigation, dissecting actual and theoretical cases and how a company might benefit from a well-thought-out legal response.

The book is written in a lively, engaging style, with touches of humor that never detract from the seriousness of the topic. It is part of a management series produced by the University of Michigan Business School, developed after the school analyzed the results of a survey in which managers reported their most pressing business problems. This particular topic is certainly a major one: According to Siedel, "It is estimated that Fortune 500 executives spend 20 percent of their time on litigation-related matters." This book can help them turn that 20 percent of time into a productive way of redefining their businesses. (Jossey-Bass, \$25) 