

The Leadership Dojo, by Richard Storozzi-Heckles

Book Review by Philip L. Jacobsen

Philip wrote this review for Dr. Gary Klein's Project Management class at UCCS University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The value that The Leadership Dojo by Richard Storozzi-Heckles offers in understanding how projects relates to the strategy of an organization, and at the same time, involves fundamentals of human issues and coordination. The Leadership Dojo says that a manager and his/her employees must always be practicing to improve themselves. Reading books and taking classes is fine, but the only way to truly become a great leader is to hone everyone's skill set in a real environment. Projects are ideal opportunities to improve a team's skill set.

The book touches on the notion that most managers create a tunnel-vision environment in their workplace. In the tunnel vision workplace the workers are concerned with their function, not their purpose in the big picture. In these situations managers think that because short term goals are being met, they don't have to change their approach to management. Employing this strategy not only focuses solely on extrinsic motivators but also creates negativity within the organization. When things are going well the situation isn't all bad, things are getting done and profits are made. The conflict arises when something unexpected happens. If a piece of the tunnel vision machine breaks down, then depending on the importance of the piece, the entire network could go into a funk.

The valuable lesson in this is that a manager can benefit greatly by explaining the big picture to his or her employees, or even rotating the employees around to different parts of a project. People often get frustrated when they don't understand what the issues are. In turn they create conflict with others. While I was deployed as a contracting officer, lack of understanding often led to this type of conflict. When people understand each other and each other's purpose the friction is reduced. Human coordination is one of the simplest things to accomplish, yet ironically in the name of technology we've reduced it. E-mail, phone calls, and text messaging have reduced the value of personal interaction.

This is happening in front of my very eyes at work. The last few months I've been assigned to process improvement. My impression is that breakdowns in communication result in multiple issues and infighting.

The Leadership Dojo closes by saying that the manager's employees will eventually reflect the manager in the way they go about their business. In my situation the leaders have a vision, and they pass the vision down as a set of tasks. They explain the tasks each organization is responsible for, but don't paint the big picture. One year into the vision's inception some groups still do the work that others are supposed to handle, and some work doesn't get done because it seems trivial in the eyes of those assigned to do it. Cases like these emphasize the value of human interaction.

If an executive sees a new project or new company direction as a set of steps on a checklist then those charged with executing the change will also look at it like that. When a task fails, the team will approach it the same as the manager, and few things create a cynical environment like having multiple groups looking to place blame. An executive must be able to paint the big picture for his/her managers. The managers must be able to pass that vision to the workers. The Leadership Dojo suggests that the best way to make this process and in turn help the leaders within the company improve, is to practice it through projects..

Editor's Note: Thanks Philip! Readers, if you would like to make a comment to review author Philip Jacobsen, or add a comment to this page in the website, [contact us!](#)