



# weLEAD Book Review

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## Great Business Teams

### *Cracking the Code for Standout Performance*

John Wiley - 2008 (239 pages hardback)

Author Howard M. Guttman

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This book written by Howard M. Guttman is not merely for the purpose of reading, but to use as a literal blueprint by organizations, as well as by entrepreneurs. It is for anyone who has the desire to start their own organization, and build teams of individuals to help operate their business as efficiently and economically as possible. This book goes beyond calling a gathered group of individuals *team players*, but encourages the establishment of great teams of individuals, all acting in complete unison and in sync in accordance with their organization's vision and mission.

Mr. Guttman does not simply theorize, hypothesize or speculate on what great teams consist of, and how to establish them. He writes of real world examples and situations about individuals who started their great teams and aligned their organizations for future greatness. This book contains twenty-five years of research, interviews and real time observations. With that much research I am sure he could have mentioned many other successful individuals who established great teams with their organizations, but he clearly makes a number of strong points with the individuals he chooses to write about. This book was written so that we, who want to develop our organizations into great teams, don't have to spend years making our own mistakes by "trial and error." I remember listening one time to a seminar by the late Mr. Jim Rohn when he said, "learn from those who already have been there, and done that, and made their mistakes and wrote about it, you can save a lot of time and trouble if you just read what others' have done." This book, without a doubt, is an example of what Mr. Rohn meant.

Throughout the book, Mr. Guttman refers to a great team as "mini" board members who collaborate, discuss and make decisions *together*, and more importantly agree on all final decisions made even if some members don't agree fully with the decisions that were made by the team as a whole. An interesting term that he writes about is something called a "subteam." This is a term that I never thought about before. A subteam is yet *another* team, or multiple teams established by the primary team. The subteam can be just an individual or multiple individuals. The purpose of a subteam(s) is to gather information for the primary team so that the primary team can concentrate and focus on the strategic plans of the organization. The subteam(s) makes recommendations for the decisions to be carried out. As one executive comments to his senior team in the book, "would you rather be spending the majority of your day putting out fires, or utilize your time for the *planning* of the organization's future?"

Mr. Guttman emphasizes numerous times that a great team can only be established if everyone is on board, including the top executives of every organization. If the CEO or president is not willing to relinquish control of being the sole decision maker, then building a great team will be stunted. The top executive must be willing to allow others to make decisions, a term he calls, "horizontal decision making," allowing organizations to make hierarchal protocol a thing of the past. Organizations that have established great teams have allowed top decision makers to be less involved in the everyday decision-making process. Guttman writes about top leaders who make a final decision *only* when the

team cannot come to a full agreement. Even then he encourages them to achieve a decision or consensus.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this review, this book was written more as a blueprint for those leaders who desire to establish great teams. The process begins by “aligning” individuals who are part of a team so they are in total agreement of the direction the organization needs to go in. Without *first* aligning the organization, managers will be just “spinning their wheels” in a futile attempt to establish teams. He identifies and uses as examples, executives who go through different levels and processes that an individual organization must go through in order to begin the great team process. We as readers then can follow the blueprint in action. Once you have finished reading the entire book, Mr. Guttman takes it one step further by adding two appendixes at the end. Both appendixes are meant for instructional purposes to guide us in our quest to build a superior team.

With the constant changes that surround us almost daily in our organizations, decision-making by just one individual is becoming increasingly harder. Leaders must understand how to fully use the talent of the individuals who operate within their organizations and this book is a great resource for them to begin the process. Even if you already have teams established, are they *great* teams? As Mr. Guttman writes in his book, mediocre teams establish mediocre organizations, and great teams establish great organizations. I highly recommend this book to top executives, down to front line supervisors, and everyone in between. This book will help you decide whether you want a great organization, or remain with the status quo and continue to operate at a mediocre pace.

*Reviewed by Ken Altenbach*

***weLEAD Rating – highly recommended***

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