



Manager Redefined

The Competitive Advantage in the Middle of Your Organization

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

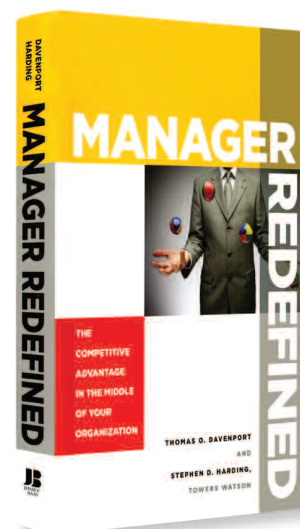
Management and leadership have been with us since humans invented work. For most of the last two decades, however, the manager position has been under direct assault. It's become a ragged conglomeration of pieces and parts, designed to do too many things and engineered to do none of them well. People both higher and lower in the organizational hierarchy question its value, resent the authority it confers and criticize the competence of the people who do it.

In *Manager Redefined*, Tom Davenport and Stephen Harding look at the picture differently. They view supervisors and managers as centers of insight and influence, underappreciated in many organizations, but endowed nevertheless with the potential to make dramatic contributions to enterprise success. The authors challenge readers to consider the power embedded in their managers' accumulated knowledge and experience. Building and unleashing that power is the authors' aim in *Manager Redefined*.

Davenport and Harding make the case that executives and the Human Resources function should see managers as more than just message amplifiers, system executors or (heaven forbid) a necessary evil required mainly to keep employees in line. They urge companies to think of their managers instead as potential sources of competitive advantage.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to resolve one of the most important and often difficult aspects of management — motivating performance.
- How to build autonomy and self-efficacy among team members while maintaining accountability.
- How to unleash the power and potential of managers for company goals.
- How high-performing managers can contribute to organizational success.



by Thomas O. Davenport and Stephen D. Harding

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: MANAGER REDEFINED

by Thomas O. Davenport and Stephen D. Harding

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PART I: CONTEXT

Organizations (along with academics, consultants and gurus) have relentlessly elevated leadership at the expense of management.

In a *Harvard Business Review* article in 2003, Jonathan Gosling and Henry Mintzberg wrote, “Nobody aspires to being a good manager anymore; everybody wants to be a great leader.” And then they added a warning note: “But the separation of management from leadership is dangerous. Just as management without leadership encourages an uninspired style, which deadens activities, leadership without management encourages a disconnected style, which promotes hubris.”

What do “leader” and “manager” really mean to the functioning of an organization? The terms denote different actions and different outcomes — but what actions and what outcomes? If we extrapolate a bit from what Rear Admiral Grace Hopper said — that managers focus principally on assets, and leaders concentrate on people — we can clarify both definitions. Leadership, we submit, entails:

- Envisioning an improved situation (for instance, achieving an organizational goal, changing strategic direction, emerging from a crisis).
- Determining the best path for reaching that desirable end.
- Inspiring in others the self-motivation to reach the appealing state (that is, creating the conditions under which people feel the intrinsic motivation to move ahead).

- Boosting energy (by recognizing success, for example), removing obstacles that impede progress (political constraints, for instance) and demonstrating resilience (remaining steadfast in spite of failures), so that people can make speedy and efficient strides toward the goal.

A leader is like the captain of a 15th-century Portuguese ship sailing out of sight of land for the first time in search of gold, silver and spices. The captain envisions the destination, plots the course (with the help of a skilled navigator, of course) and engenders courage among the sailors (“Don’t worry, men, I’m pretty sure we won’t sail off the edge of the Earth”). Of course, the mission will fail if the boat springs a leak, the sails become shredded or the food goes rotten. Seeing to the soundness of those assets is the responsibility of a manager. With all this in mind, we suggest that managing consists of:

- Acquiring, deploying, building, preserving and exploiting assets.
- Overseeing processes and implementing systems for putting those assets to use.
- Monitoring results and making adjustments.

Without leadership, people lack the vision and courage to set sail and discover the New World. Without management, the boat sinks before it gets there.

The Definition, and the Power, of Engagement

The degree to which managers matter depends, in



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part, on how effectively they contribute to employee engagement. We believe that, of all the attitudes and behaviors of employees in companies across the world, engagement best captures the energy and dedication that underlie human capital investment. Research performed by our colleagues at Towers Watson shows that engagement comprises three distinct dimensions: rational, emotional and motivational. The thinking (rational) component of engagement refers to how strongly employees understand and support the goals and values of the organization for which they work. The feeling (emotional) component of engagement describes the affective attachment that individuals feel toward their organizations. The behavioral (motivational) element encompasses employees' willingness to engage voluntarily in discretionary efforts for the good of the company — that is, to invest more of their human capital than is required just to keep their jobs.

When organizations succeed at generating engagement among their employees, those employees not only score high on the three engagement dimensions, but also channel their human capital investment into areas the company cares about. ●

Why Managers Have a Tough Job

What makes being a manager so unattractive? On one level, the answer is obvious — just look around today's workplace. As downsizing lengthens everyone's to-do lists, expanding workloads add new burdens to the manager's job. With many organizations expecting managers to act as player-coaches, both performing and overseeing work, their roles often become complex and unwieldy. Organizational flattening and widening of managers' spans of control stretch their ability to spend time coaching, or even to become acquainted with, any individual employee. It's hardly surprising that respondents to a Randstad study cited increased stress as the No. 1 reason for avoiding management responsibility. They also said they hated the idea of handling disgruntled employees (like themselves, perhaps), dealing with loads of administrative paperwork and having to terminate people, many of whom were peers not long before. Given the disinclination of people to take on manager jobs, Randstad predicts what it calls a "looming manager shortage." They recommend that, to deal with the shortfall of managers, organizations need to reconsider how they define managerial roles.

When you consider the full array of leadership and management responsibilities that fall to people with supervisor and manager titles, one thing becomes clear

Work and Reward Are One and the Same

Ultimately, an employee's work and the deal that rewards him for the quality and quantity of that work are inextricably bound. Managers must recognize that, in a sense, work and reward are one and the same. They can be guided by the words of American civil rights activist and author W.E.B. DuBois: "The return from your work must be the satisfaction which that work brings you and the world's need of that work. With this, life is heaven, or as near heaven as you can get. Without this — with work which you despise, which bores you and which the world does not need — this life is hell."

— managers have difficult jobs. Workload pressure from downsizing, unworkable ranges of responsibility and wide spans of control all burden managers' jobs, increase their stress levels and reduce their effectiveness. Little wonder employees are skeptical about the competence of the people to whom they report.

We Really Don't Like Being Told What to Do

Our inherent internal conflict about leadership has an important corollary: We really don't want to follow orders. Being directed reminds us that someone else gets to call the shots. Still, if we must give up authority, we want those who have it to exercise it appropriately. As a result, we place a heavy burden on managers to hit a small target between being too assertive and not assertive enough.

The happy medium is happy indeed — it constitutes the most effective behavior in the eyes of employees. A research study conducted by Daniel Ames and Francis Flynn at Columbia University showed that managers who manifest moderate levels of assertiveness accomplished just as much as the most assertive, but with far lower social costs (in the form of disgruntled employees).

Every time a manager makes the wrong choice, he creates discontent. Of the two possible transgressions, of course, too much assertiveness engenders greater resentment.

In corporate organizations, bad boss behavior rarely leads to violence, but it can lead to lawsuits. In 2007, legislation was pending in New Jersey and at least three other states to give employees the right to seek damages if a manager created an abusive environment. In New Jersey, the bill specified that an individual who felt he or she had been wrongfully treated could sue for as much as \$25,000. ●

A New Model of Manager Performance

Any group can enhance its chances for success by innovating and passing on successful methods. The goal is an edge over the competition. Corporations that achieve and sustain competitive advantage consistently deliver superior financial results.

Management guru Peter Senge has famously said that the only sustainable competitive advantage is the ability to learn faster than your competition. Although learning is certainly necessary, incorporating knowledge into what and how you produce creates the real competitive edge.

If managers play a role in the creation and application of knowledge (a key element of human capital), it then follows that they also have a part to play in achieving competitive success.

The Manager Performance Model

We analyzed our consulting experience in manager role definition and reviewed survey results from companies around the world and across the performance spectrum. Using all this information, we developed a performance model that we believe depicts how managers contribute most directly and significantly to sustainable competitive advantage. The model contains four categories of manager performance requirements:

1. Executing Tasks. This element comprises planning work, clarifying job-related roles, structuring specific job tasks, monitoring performance and making the necessary adjustments to ensure that work meets organizational needs and supports business strategy. Overseeing task execution is, in many ways, the most traditional aspect of the manager's job. Of the four performance categories, it focuses most directly on the asset deployment, process oversight and systems implementation elements that most people think of as integral to managing.

Even when the descriptors sound familiar (such as encouraging teamwork, for example), the expectations and goals of task-execution approaches will vary: Teams at Intel share quality improvement ideas; teams at Southwest Airlines scramble to serve customers; teams at SAS, a leader in business intelligence software, work with users to create new products.

2. Developing People. The next element of the performance model calls for managers to create opportunities for each employee to add to his or her storehouse of human capital. In doing so, managers create the ability for people to carry out their jobs and achieve their goals.

Southwest managers focus learning on both individual task elements and on cross-functional training so that people understand fully what others do and the team as a whole can function better.

3. Delivering the Deal. Managers play a central role in brokering the exchange of each employee's investment of human capital for the portfolio of financial and nonfinancial, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that constitute a return on that investment. We refer to this reciprocal arrangement as *the deal* between employee and enterprise.

Intel, Southwest and SAS all understand the importance of providing an appealing deal to employees as compensation for their contributions to strategic success. Naturally, financial rewards play a part in the organizations' overall reward portfolios. The Intel jobs website, for example, proudly tells prospective candidates about the organization's incentive philosophy: "Bonuses are the major element of Intel's variable pay and are central to Intel's approach to compensation. Our philosophy is to offer a greater portion of variable pay than the market average, because this provides a strong link between employees' compensation and company performance."

4. Energizing Change. Effective managers look ahead in time and outside the boundaries of their units and their organizations to anticipate and respond to environmental shifts and to envision, plan for and create the future. Sometimes this requires managers to respond to change that is imposed and unavoidable — reorganization, strategic redirection or downsizing, for example. In other cases, innovation and creativity may spark the change, as people develop new offerings or find better ways to work. These forms of change call for varying levels of reactivity or proactivity, adaptability or resilience. ●

Constructing the Manager Role

We work with many organizations whose promotion process frequently puts highly qualified technicians into managerial roles where they fail, or at least underperform. Managers, the Human Resources department and executives all acknowledge the problem. There are many possible causal pathologies: expediency, believing that direct production is all that really counts, concluding that managers really don't matter if organizations have charismatic senior leaders. Sometimes, organizations program the manager's job to fail by promoting the right person but subsequently failing to define the job sensibly or support it effectively.

The analysis reflects sensitivity to the assumptions

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many organizations bring to their conceptions of what managers are supposed to do and how they are supposed to do it. Types of skills, reporting spans and balancing work and leadership must all be considered. The point is to look at these factors together and consider how they influence each other rather than making decisions that rely too heavily on a single factor. The prize is a role definition that makes it possible for managers to execute the elements depicted in the manager performance model.

Some juggling and balancing are inevitable in the manager's job, but a thoughtful approach to defining the position can make managers' lives easier and maximize their contribution to the organization's strategic advantage.

PART II: IMPLEMENTATION

Psychologists know that we humans give ourselves far too much credit for our ability to perform rational analysis. In fact, our reasoning is fraught with deviations in judgment, cognitive faults that influence how we perceive the world and act on our perceptions.

Planning Work

From the list of logical fallacies to which humans (and therefore managers) are heir, three have a direct effect on work and project planning:

- *The framing effect.* Drawing different conclusions or taking different actions from a single set of facts, depending on how the facts are presented or labeled.
- *The illusion of control.* Believing that we can direct, or at least influence, events over which we actually have no power.
- *The planning fallacy.* Consistently underestimating the time and cost required to complete a task.

These biases influence how managers and other humans instinctively approach planning. We all experience them to a greater or lesser degree. We must recognize and deal with them if we are to succeed at the basic tasks of goal setting, resource planning and action taking, no matter what competitive strategy we hope to execute.

Clarifying Job Roles

Once the planning is finished, there's work to be done.

As with work planning, managers must overcome a set of cognitive and attitudinal biases as they work with employees to design jobs. These two are particularly relevant:

- *The actor-observer bias.* This is the tendency to attribute our own actions to situational factors and attribute the behavior of others to stable personality traits. If I feel stress before a big presentation, for

example, I might ascribe it to my concern that this session will be attended by important clients, a circumstance I use to explain my sweaty palms. Conversely, if I see a colleague showing obvious nervousness before a big speech, I might put it down to his having low self-confidence. I know I'm a great presenter; I'm not so sure about him.

- *The illusion of transparency.* This occurs when we overestimate our ability to understand others' personal mental states. We believe that we know others better than they know us. In a related way, people tend to think of themselves as having complex and variable personalities, while viewing others as simpler and more predictable.

These biases threaten to impede managers' efforts to perceive accurately the complex needs and competencies of those around them and to use those insights to craft suitable work roles.

Monitoring Progress

Monitoring work progress and results, the third dimension of the manager's task-execution responsibilities, should directly reflect the logic established in work planning and job role clarification. In a product-differentiation strategy, for example, innovation matters. Therefore, the manager of the R&D unit will pay special attention to metrics indicating successful new product commercialization. Individual and team work flows will be structured to focus attention on product development, and customized jobs will provide for the free-flowing creativity necessary to inspire innovation. ●

Developing People

In a world where organizational focus on employee development has been compromised and learning investments threatened, managers' direct efforts to help people build their human capital take on increased urgency. An astute manager has a wide array of approaches at his disposal for engaging in direct human capital-building efforts with employees. These include:

- *Coaching.* Providing hands-on skills-improvement advice and instruction by putting learning and action close together; encouraging performance, nurturing and reinforcing success.
- *Teaching.* Imparting knowledge; learning and action may be separated by time and space.
- *Informing.* Providing information on specific job functions and broader organizational and strategic context.
- *Mentoring.* Giving the employee career guidance,

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general development counseling and advice, sponsorship and support.

- *Exemplifying*. Displaying the desired attitudes and actions.

Managers may engage in any or all of these actions more or less constantly and without clear delineation of when one form of direct development stops and another begins. ●

Delivering the Deal

It is difficult to overestimate the motivational power many executives and most organizations ascribe to financial rewards. “Pay for performance” has become a largely unchallenged, albeit aspirational, foundation for reward strategies. Among respondents to our Reward Challenges and Changes survey, only 18 percent say their organizations have no formal program for differentiating performance and steering comparatively higher levels of financial rewards to people designated as high performers. Stanford professor Jeffrey Pfeffer goes to the heart of the matter when he says, “The big push for incentive pay stems from a belief that if employees were just compensated appropriately, virtually every organizational and management problem could be solved.”

And how well do the programs actually work? Not very well, if you ask employees. Across our database of survey responses, less than two-thirds of employees of U.S. firms say they understand how their performance bonuses are calculated. When asked to consider their total compensation, 67 percent say they are fairly paid for the work they do. But only 43 percent believe their organizations do a good job of matching pay to performance.

Managerial Alchemy

We don’t mean to suggest that incentive plans have no place in the deal between individual and enterprise. Intelligently defined and judiciously used, they have great power to signal to employees the behaviors and results the organization values most. Incentives can also play an important part in a manager’s efforts to gather her team and recognize contribution — as long as the recognition encompasses more than just financial rewards. Consider this description of a reward-allocation philosophy, a paraphrase by Pfeffer of the thoughts of George Zimmer, founder of clothing retailer Men’s Warehouse: “You want incentives to be just large enough but not too large. ... You want rewards to be large enough to be noticed, and you want to use them to provide an occasion for celebration and recognition, to let the group come together and share successes and

enjoy each other’s companionship. But you certainly don’t want to make the incentives so large that they begin to drive and thereby distort behavior.”

Managers who hope to use the reward tools afforded by organizations to deliver an engaging and energizing deal to employees must:

- Not just administer the organization’s reward systems, but also perform a kind of alchemy, transforming extrinsic financial incentives into sources of intrinsic fulfillment.
 - Not deliver the same reward portfolio to everyone, but instead create individualized deals for each employee; managers must understand that, although those deals may not differ greatly across the employee population, it’s important that each person feel as though his deal is custom-tailored for him.
 - Not just execute the recognition programs provided by the company, but rather create a recognition-rich environment in which formal and informal, predictable and unanticipated recognition turbocharge employee engagement. ●
-

Energizing Change

When organizations respond to external forces by resolving to change, they need to carve out specific roles for line managers. By doing so, they improve their chances that employees will not just accept, but also embrace, the new ways of working. One study, conducted by a team of researchers at Troy University and Auburn University, looked at how health care workers adapted to the introduction of new record-keeping technology. The team studied how nurses and other workers responded to the transition from using laptop computers for patient care documentation to using handheld devices. Nurses also had to move from printed patient care plans to automated clinical planning software. The nurses hadn’t sought these changes. From their standpoint, the new ways of working were imposed by the organization. From the organization’s standpoint, the potential benefits were clear. Nurses would become more efficient, improving the continuity of patient care and reducing the expense associated with copying and pushing paper.

The researchers found that individual adaptability in response to new work-altering technology depends on the degree to which managers:

- *Ensure that technology provides work support and improves performance*. When a job becomes more interesting and its mastery more fulfilling, individual perfor-

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mance improves. Work process changes that add to job enrichment and mastery therefore contribute to performance. Managers needed to make sure that the new devices made jobs easier, not harder, and workers more productive, not less so.

- *Involve workers in the introduction of new technologies.* Involvement means giving the affected populations some say about when and how technology would be introduced. It requires managers to seek employees' advice on how employees, patients and customers might respond to new ways of doing things.
- *Clarify individual roles within the affected organizations before new technology comes on the scene.* Role clarity goes to the heart of rational engagement. It forms an essential connection between individual work and organizational success. Workers who have a better line of sight between their jobs and the success of the organization show more inclination to embrace changes of all kinds. Their comfort with change becomes all that much stronger when their managers help them envision a positive effect on product and service outcomes.

Choosing to Change

The manager does not act alone. His or her supportive actions must be bolstered by an organizational willingness to accept and accommodate new ideas. The sociopolitical context of organizations can at times militate against creative change, which entails, after all, a disruption of the status quo. Onne Janssen from the Netherlands looked at the relationship between manager support for innovative behavior and the perceived influence that individuals felt they had in the workplace — their belief that their actions would indeed achieve the desired effect. His research produced clear results: “Employees’ sense of influence needs to be augmented by perceptions that their supervisors are likely to support their innovation. ... Employees feel that their supervisors are the key actors who have the power to grant or deny them the support necessary for the further development, protection and application of their ideas.”

The manager thus plays a dual role: fostering an environment that encourages and expects creative behavior, and providing the support necessary to ensure that such behavior is accepted and assimilated within the organization. ●

Authenticity and Trust

Integrity is a main pillar of authenticity. Integrity means adhering consistently to a code of high moral

ethics and behavior. Consistency, in turn, forms a core element of trust. We think of authenticity and trust as sequential and complementary elements that add power to our manager performance model. In the architecture of our model, they form the foundation, the basis for strength and stability.

Connecting Authenticity and Trust

Trust is defined as the willingness of one individual to make him- or herself vulnerable to another. The acceptance of vulnerability must be grounded in the expectation that the trustee will act in a predictable way that benefits, or at least doesn't harm, the person granting trust.

Of all the elements in our manager performance model, none has a more dramatic effect on a manager's ability to work effectively offstage than reciprocal trust. If employees don't trust the people with whom they transact their business, then transactions will be few, meager and unfulfilling. Conversely, managers who foster trust, and who do all the other things we've described to make individuals and groups effective, create the environment for individual and group success.

By behaving authentically, managers establish the groundwork for trust.

Four Components of Authenticity

Authentic behavior is not a unitary, either-you-have-it-or-you-don't concept. Rather it comprises a set of attributes that any individual may display to a greater or lesser extent. A research team led by Arizona State University's Fred Walumbwa studied populations as diverse as Chinese, Kenyans and North Americans. They found supporting evidence for four components of authenticity:

- *Self-awareness.* Mindfulness about how one experiences and makes sense of the world. Self-awareness denotes an accurate understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses, and insight into how one's behavior is perceived by, and affects, other people.
- *Relational transparency.* Being consistent and genuine in interactions with others and presenting one's true and honest self to the world, without pretense, manipulation or intentional distortion. That value of transparency applies to close associates as well as to oneself; a manager strong in relational transparency helps others identify both positive and negative aspects of their behavior.
- *Balanced processing.* Willingness to evaluate all relevant information, including data that are challenging or uncomfortable, before reaching a decision. Authentic

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leaders are less likely than others to ignore or distort information they may not want to hear, to deny the relevance of messages about their personal shortcomings or to punish the bearers of those messages.

- *Internalized moral perspective.* Guiding one's behavior and decisions by personal ethical standards rather than by external pressures from a group, organization or society. As Walumbwa and his colleagues explain it, a person's moral perspective is guided by deeply held values that enable the individual to avoid acting merely to please others or to attain rewards or avoid punishments. ●

Fitting the Pieces Together

Here are the summary attributes that we believe contribute most directly to a manager's success at playing the roles we've outlined across strategies, companies and functions:

- **Requisite Variety.** This concept comes from systems theory, specifically the cybernetics discipline. It means simply that a flexible system encompassing many options performs better in an uncertain environment than does a system with fewer options. That is, only variety can respond to variety. For managers, this means having the insight to recognize, and the adaptability to respond to, a range of employee attitudes and behavioral styles. The goal is efficient connection and personal rapport.
- **Cognitive Fluidity.** Cognitive fluidity goes beyond simple brain power. It denotes the ability to make intellectual connections across topics and domains. More than just balance, cognitive fluidity calls for connectivity and mental agility. A manager strong in this attribute will prove effective, for example, at determining how a redirection of business strategy will affect unit-level work planning and operational requirements; discerning the meaning for organizational structure; and identifying the ripple effects of individual employees and their deals with the organization.
- **Ability to Catalyze Action.** The essential paradox of our concept of the manager's job is that managers can perform better from offstage. This means acting as a catalyst, precipitating results without participating as a functional element in the processes used by individuals and teams. The manager-as-catalyst attribute encompasses classic competencies like results focus, bias for action and goal orientation. But we mean something more. To perform as a catalyst, a manager must combine relentless attention to what

Authentic Leadership

A group of researchers from the University of Nebraska has studied and elaborated on authentic leadership. They summarize the relationship between authenticity and trust this way: "Authentic leaders act in accordance with deep personal values and convictions, to build credibility and win the respect and trust of followers by encouraging diverse viewpoints and building networks of collaborative relationships with followers."

matters with a highly developed ability to get out of the way.

- **Ability to Navigate the Organization.** The ability to find and use an organization's tools and resources contributes as much to manager performance as does any other high-level attribute. This is the ultimate example of firm-specific, how-we-do-things-around-here knowledge. It requires cognitive fluidity, which enables the manager to see readily how to connect disparate resources (such as diverse learning programs) into a unified result (a practical development process for a single employee).
- **Social Intelligence.** Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence* and *Social Intelligence*, includes two components in his definition of social intelligence: awareness (gathering information on others and understanding how the social world functions) and facility (effective interactions using the information gathered). These attributes provide the interpersonal insight and the influence skill needed to navigate within and outside organizational boundaries. Social intelligence encompasses the authenticity that guides managers to honest understanding of their own and others' strengths and weaknesses. It's a key to working with teams from the right distance and creating the networks that provide learning contacts. Humility is essential; a sense of humor doesn't hurt. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Manager Redefined*, you'll also like:

1. ***Bury My Heart at Conference Room B* by Stan Slap.** Slap helps executives ignite the massive power of any manager's emotional commitment.
2. ***Managing* by Henry Mintzberg.** Mintzberg's best-seller may be the most revealing book yet written about what managers do, how they do it and how they can do it better.
3. ***Tough Calls from the Corner Office* by Harlan Steinbaum.** Steinbaum provides inspiring, thought-provoking stories and proves that in many cases, the toughest decisions an executive makes are often the ones that define his or her career.