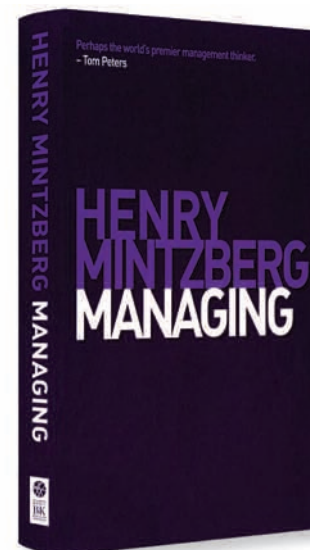




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by Henry Mintzberg

Managing

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Managers are idolized like few others in society. Newspapers are filled with stories about their exploits and the shelves of bookstores are teeming with books for their edification. We try hard to train huge numbers of students in MBA programs to become managers. Yet we know surprisingly little about what management means and what it means to be a manager.

In *Managing*, management expert Henry Mintzberg sets out to recover the essence of managing. Mintzberg observed 29 different managers at work in vastly divergent fields and settings, ranging from a refugee camp to a symphony orchestra. What he saw — the unrelenting pace of the job, the frequent interruptions, the dizzying variety of activity and the fact that e-mail now makes it all worse — led Mintzberg to develop a new model, one grounded in the fact that management is neither a profession or a science, but a *practice*.

Managing is vintage Mintzberg: iconoclastic, irreverent, carefully researched and mythbreaking. He considers the intense dynamics and untold variety of the job of managing, as well as its inescapable conundrums, and how managers become more effective. His objective is straightforward. Managing is important for anyone affected by its practice, which in our world of organizations means all of us. We need to understand it better, in order for it to be practiced better.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Are leaders really more important than managers?
- Where has all the judgment gone?
- Has management style been over-rated?
- Is e-mail destroying management practice?
- How are managers supposed to connect when the very nature of their jobs disconnects them from what they are managing?

CONTENTS

Managing Ahead

Page 2

The Dynamics of Managing

Page 3

A Model of Managing

Page 4

The Untold Varieties of Managing

Page 5

The Inescapable Conundrums of Managing

Page 6

Managing Effectively

Page 7

Managing Naturally

Page 8

THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: MANAGING

by Henry Mintzberg

The author: Henry Mintzberg is Cleghorn Professor of Management Studies at McGill University in Montreal and the winner of numerous awards from the most prestigious academic and practitioner institutions in management. He is the author of 15 books, including *Managers Not MBAs*, *Strategy Safari*, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning* and *Mintzberg on Management*.

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Managing Ahead

Konosuke Matsushita, who founded the company that carries his name, claimed, “Big things and little things are my job. Middle level arrangements can be delegated.” In other words, leadership cannot simply delegate management; instead of distinguishing managers from leaders, we should be seeing managers as leaders, and leadership as management practiced well.

By putting leadership on a pedestal separated from management, we turn a social process into a personal one. No matter how much lip service is paid to the leader empowering the group, leadership still focuses on the individual. Whenever we promote leadership, we demote others, as followers. Slighted, too, is the sense of community that is important for cooperative effort in all organizations. What we should be promoting instead of leadership alone are communities of actors who get on with things naturally, leadership together with management being an intrinsic part of that.

Managing as a Practice

It is time to recognize that managing is neither a science nor a profession; it is a practice, learned primarily through experience and rooted in context.

Science is about the development of systematic knowledge through research. That is hardly the purpose of management, which is about helping to get things done in organizations. Management is not even an applied science, because that is still a science. Management certainly *applies* science: managers have to use all the knowledge they can get. And they certainly use analysis, rooted in the scientific method (meaning here scientific proof more than scientific discovery).

But effective managing is more dependent on art and

is especially rooted in craft. Art produces the “insights” and “vision” based on intuition. And craft is about learning from experience — working things out as the manager goes along.

Thus, managing can be seen to take place within a triangle when art, craft and the use of science meet. Art brings in the ideas and the integration; craft makes the connections, building on tangible experiences; and science provides the order, through systematic analysis of knowledge.

Most of the work that can be programmed in an organization need not concern its managers directly; specialists can do it. That leaves the managers with much of the messy stuff — the intractable problems, the complicated connections. This is what makes the practice of managing so fundamentally “soft,” and why labels such as experience, intuition, judgment and wisdom are so commonly needed to describe it. Put together a good deal of craft with the right touch of art alongside some use of science, and you end up with a job that is above all a *practice*. There is no “one best way” to manage; it depends on the situation.

Not a Profession

Little of management practice has been reliably codified, let alone certified as to its effectiveness.

Because of their codified knowledge, engineering and medicine must be learned formally. And so the trained expert can almost always outperform the layperson. Not so in management. Few of us would trust the intuitive engineer or physician, with no formal training, yet we trust all kinds of managers who have never spent a day in a management classroom.

The patient does not argue with the surgeon or, for



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Summary: MANAGING

that matter, the surgeon with the molecular biologist. In their own domain, each knows better. But managers who believe they know better get in the way of their practice, because it has to be largely one of facilitation. The manager, by the definition used here, is someone responsible for a whole organization or some identifiable part of it (which, for want of a better term, shall be called a *unit*).

Bringing Out the Best in Other People

To use that old saying, attributed to Mary Parker Follett in the 1920s, managers get things done largely through other people — those in the unit who formally report to them as well as others around it who do not. Managers have to know a lot, especially about their specific contexts, and they have to make decisions based on that knowledge. But especially in large organizations and those concerned with “knowledge work,” the manager has to help bring out the best in other people so that *they* can know better, decide better and act better.

Is there something professional about the manager who treats his or her practice nobly, responsibly? Something important, yes, but let’s not mix up acting responsibly with practicing a profession. Instead, let’s recognize management as a *calling*, and appreciate that efforts to professionalize it and turn it into a science undermine that calling. ●

The Dynamics of Managing

If we wish to make significant headway in improving the practice of managing, we need to bring the covert reality in line with the overt image.

Folklore: *The manager is a reflective, systematic planner.*

Facts: Study after study has shown that (a) managers work at an unrelenting pace; (b) their activities are typically characterized by brevity, variety, fragmentation and discontinuity; and (c) they are strongly oriented to action.

No matter what they are doing, managers are plagued by what they might do and what they must do. To be superficial is an occupational hazard of managerial work, certainly compared with the specialized work most managers did before they went into this job. To succeed, managers have to become proficient at their superficiality.

Folklore: *The manager depends on aggregated information, best supplied by a formal system.*

Fact: Managers tend to favor informal media of communication, especially the oral ones of telephone calls and meetings, also the electronic one of e-mail.

Unlike other workers, the manager does not leave the telephone, the meeting or the e-mail to get back to work. These contacts are the work. The ordinary work of the unit or organization — producing a product, selling it, even conducting a study or writing a report — is not usually undertaken by its manager. The manager’s productive output has to be gauged largely in terms of the information he or she transmits orally or by e-mail.

Folklore: *Managing is mostly about hierarchical relationships between a “superior” and “subordinates.”*

Fact: Managing is as much about lateral relationships among colleagues and associates as it is about hierarchical relationships.

We might characterize the manager’s position as the neck of an hourglass, sitting between a network of outside contacts and the internal unit being managed. The manager receives all kinds of information and requests from insiders and outsiders, which are scanned, absorbed and passed on to others, again both inside and outside the unit.

Folklore: *Managers maintain tight control — of their time, their activities, their units.*

Fact: The manager is neither conductor nor puppet: Control to the extent possible tends to be covert more than overt, by establishing some obligations to which the manager must later attend and by turning other obligations to the manager’s advantage.

The effective managers seem to be not those with the greatest degrees of freedom but the ones who use to advantage whatever degrees of freedom they can find. In other words, these people do not just *do* the job; they *make* the job.

The Impact of the Internet

The advantages of the Internet are evident and quite astonishing. Managers can keep in current touch with people all over the world in ways that used to be unthinkable. They can also share large amounts of information with a great many people. These advantages enable them to greatly extend their informational networks and rather easily conduct their affairs across the globe.

It is important to note that this new medium remains thin. Like conventional mail, e-mail is restricted by the poverty of words alone: There is no tone of voice to hear, no gestures to see, no presence to feel — even images can be a nuisance to create. E-mail may simply limit the user’s “ability to support emotional, nuanced and complex interactions.” Managing is as much about all these things as it is about the factual content of the messages.

Summary: MANAGING

The danger of e-mail is that it may give a manager the impression of being in touch while the only thing actually being touched is the keyboard.

The Internet may be enhancing networks while weakening communities, within organizations as well as across them.

E-mail increases the pace and pressure of managing, and likely the interruptions as well.

The Lateral Nature of the Job

People who report to a manager are few and fixed, in contrast to the network of people outside the unit that is far larger and potentially unlimited. So this new medium that makes it so easy to establish new contacts, and to keep “in touch” with the ones already established, likely encourages the extension of managers’ external networks at the expense of their internal communication.

The Internet may be driving much management practice over the edge, making it so frenetic that it has become dysfunctional: too superficial, too disconnected, too conformist. Perhaps the ultimately connected manager has become disconnected from what matters, while this overactivity is destroying the practice of managing itself. ●

A Model of Managing

A new model of managing puts the manager in the center, between the unit for which he or she has formal responsibility (by definition) and its surroundings, of two kinds: the rest of the organization (unless the manager is chief executive, responsible for the entire organization), and the outside world relevant to the unit (customers, partners, etc.).

The overriding purpose of managing is to ensure that the unit serves *its* basic purpose, whether that be to sell products in a retail chain or care for the elderly in a nursing home. This, of course, requires the taking of effective *actions*. Mostly other people in the unit do that, each a specialist in his or her own right. But sometimes a manager gets close to this *action*, as when Jacques Benz, Director-General of GSI, joined the meeting of a project team that was developing a new system for a customer.

One or Two Steps Back

More commonly, however, the manager takes one or two steps back from the action. One step back, he or she encourages other *people* to take action — the manager gets things done through other people by coaching, motivating, building teams, strengthening culture and so forth. Two steps back, the manager gets things done by using information to drive other people to take action.

He or she imposes a target on a sales team or carries a comment from a government official to a staff specialist. Managing takes place on three *planes*, from the conceptual to the concrete: *with information*, *through people* and *to action directly*.

Two roles are being performed on each plane. On the information plane, managers *communicate* (all around) and *control* (inside). On the people plane, they *lead* (inside) and *link* (to the outside). And on the action plane, they *do* (inside) and *deal* (outside). Also, within their own heads, managers *frame* (conceive strategies, establish priorities, etc.) and *schedule* (their own time).

The Person in the Job

Positioned in the center of the model is the manager, who personally carries out two roles in particular: framing and scheduling.

- **Framing the Job.** Managers frame their work by making particular decisions, focusing on particular issues, developing particular strategies and so forth to establish the context for everyone else working in the unit.
- **Scheduling the Work.** Scheduling is important because it brings the frame to life, determines much of what the manager seeks to do and enables him or her to use whatever degrees of freedom are available.

Managing Through Information

We now turn to the three planes on which managing is manifested, beginning with that of information. To manage through information means to sit two steps removed from the ultimate purpose of managing: Information is processed by the manager to encourage other people to take the necessary actions.

Two main roles describe managing on the information plane: one labeled *communicating*, to promote the flow of information all around the manager; and the other labeled *controlling*, to use information to drive behavior mainly within the managed unit.

Managing With People

To manage *with* people, instead of *through* information, is to move one step closer to action but still to remain removed from it.

On this plane, the manager helps other people make things happen: *They* are the doers. There are two managerial roles on the people plane: *leading* people within the unit and *linking* to people outside it.

Managing Action Directly

If managers manage through information — concep-

tually, from a distance — and with people — closer, personally, with affect — then on a third plane they manage action directly: more actively and concretely. What does it mean for a manager to be a doer? Doing in the context of managing usually means *almost* doing — that is, getting close to the taking of action: managing it directly, rather than indirectly by encouraging people or processing information. So the manager as “doer” is really the person who “gets it done.”

Key here is that the manager’s involvement is not passive. This is not about sitting in an office and giving orders or making judgment on those actions. Nor is it about designing strategies, structures and systems to drive other people. All of that is controlling. In the doing role, the manager gets personally involved in those actions, “hands-on”: he or she becomes part of the designing of actions that change the unit’s output.

Well-Rounded Managing

We don’t need people-oriented, information-oriented or action-oriented managers; we need managers who operate on all three planes. Only together do all these roles on all three planes provide the balance that is essential to the practice of managing.

Effective managers do not exhibit perfect balance among the roles; they tilt toward certain ones, even if they cannot neglect the others. Over time, managing has to function in a *dynamic* balance. ●

The Untold Varieties of Managing

Spend a few hours with a variety of managers and you will likely be struck by how varied this job can be. Managing is almost as varied as life itself, because it is about so much that happens in life itself.

The External Context

Every managerial job is situated in some external context, which can be taken to mean its cultural milieu, its sector in general and its “industry” in particular.

Industry influences managing most where it gets close to the production of products and the delivery of services. At any level, however, tacit knowledge of the industry remains critical.

The Organizational Context

Next we look at the organization in which the managing is embedded. Examples include:

- *The Entrepreneurial Organization*: centralized around a single leader who engages in considerable *doing* and *dealing* as well as strategic visioning.

Getting in Deep Under Pressure

It has been said of great athletes, such as a Wayne Gretzky in hockey, that they see the game just a bit slower than the other players, and so they are able to make that last-second maneuver. Perhaps this is also characteristic of effective managers: Faced with great pressure, they can cool it, sometimes just for a moment, in order to act thoughtfully.

- *The Machine Organization*: formally structured, with simple repetitive operating tasks (classic bureaucracy), its managers functioning in clearly delineated hierarchies of authority and engaging in a considerable amount of *controlling*.
- *The Professional Organization*: comprising professionals who do the operating work largely on their own, while their managers focus more externally, on *linking* and *dealing*, to support and protect the professionals.

Although aspects of these and other forms can be found in most organizations, many tilt toward one form or another. For example, hospitals favor the professional form, with the physicians more as colleagues of the managers than as subordinates, while much of retailing is entrepreneurial, especially in its early stages.

The Job Context

When we think of managing, beyond the style of the person in the job, our inclination has been to focus on the job itself — specifically, its level and function.

Level refers to the location of the job in the formal hierarchy of authority — typically “top,” “middle” and first-line supervision at the base (“bottom”).

Basically, to be a top manager means to have everyone else in the organization reporting to you, which means to have formal responsibility for the activities of the entire place. To be a bottom manager, in contrast, means to have only operating workers — no other managers — reporting to you. So to be in middle management should mean that you have managers above and below you — some reporting to you and you reporting to others — although greater liberties are often taken with this term.

The Temporal Context

Next we come to the conditions of the moment, the situation at hand. These are difficult to categorize, because

Summary: MANAGING

they can relate to so many happenings: a strike, a merger, a lawsuit, a sudden competitive attack and so forth.

The appropriate conclusion from research seems to be that the pressures of managing are often not temporary but perpetual. The pace can be unrelenting.

The Personal Context

By far the greatest attention among all the factors has been accorded to managers' "style" — namely, how they approach their work, beyond the demands of the environment, the job, the organization and the situation at hand. Style, in other words, is about how the incumbent *makes* the job, as opposed to just *doing* the job. Put two people in the same job under the same circumstances, and the differences in their behavior can be attributed to their respective style.

Author M. Dalton, for example, described President Truman as having "loved to make decisions," which he did quickly, while President Eisenhower was "disposed" to keep away from them. But there is more to personal context than style. Background and tenure count too.

Personal Style of Managing

Now we turn to personal style, the predisposition of the person in the job, whether or not influenced by background and tenure.

In the academic literature, "task versus people orientation" has received the greatest attention, much of it under the unfortunate labels of "initiating structure" versus "consideration."

In the practitioner literature, the prize for the most popular dimension probably goes to "change and innovation versus status quo orientation," as in Miles and Snow's popular categorizing of managers as Prospectors, Defenders, Analyzers and Reactors.

The Many Styles of Managing

Effective managing requires some blend of art, craft and science, whether in the person of the manager alone, or else in a management team that works together. In other words, management may not be a science, but it does need some of the order of science, while being rooted in the practicality of craft, with some of the zest of art.

What you do as a manager is mostly determined by what you face as a manager. The effective manager is usually the one whose natural style fits the context, rather than the one who changes style to fit context or context to fit style.

So while every manager has to *make* the job, he or she also has to *do* the job. That is why managerial style can-

not be considered out of context, independent of where it is practiced. ●

The Inescapable Conundrums of Managing

Managing is rife with conundrums. Managers need a better understanding of how to cope with what they cannot escape. Here are 13 conundrums of managing:

Thinking Conundrums

The Syndrome of Superficiality. *How to get in deep when there is so much pressure to get it done.*

Given the dynamic nature of their job, managers have to find time to step back and out; this has to become intrinsic to their work. Reflection without action may be passive, but action without reflection is thoughtless.

The Predicament of Planning. *How to plan, strategize, just plain think, let alone think ahead, in such a hectic job.*

Managers who deal best with the Predicament of Planning exhibit an engaging style by letting a thousand strategic flowers bloom in their organizations, and an insightful style to detect the patterns of success in these gardens of strategic flowers, rather than a cerebral style that favors analytical techniques to develop strategies in a hothouse.

The Labyrinth of Decomposition. *Where to find synthesis in a world so decomposed by analysis.*

The big picture has to be painted stroke by stroke, experience by experience. The painter may start with an overall perspective in his or her head, but from there the picture has to emerge from a host of little actions — just as a big strategy does. Few companies these days have a bigger or better strategy than IKEA, the furniture chain. *That* is one big corporate picture. It reportedly took 15 years to paint.

Information Conundrums

The Quandary of Connecting. *How to keep informed when managing by its own nature removes the manager from the very things being managed.*

The big problem today is macroleading: Managers who are disconnected don't know what's going on. "Hands off" too often amounts to "brains off."

The Dilemma of Delegating. *How to delegate when so much of the relevant information is personal, oral and often privileged.*

One way for managers to alleviate this conundrum: as regularly and comprehensively as possible, share the

privileged information with some other people in the unit. Brief them regularly and have them brief each other. And have a No. 2 who is as fully informed as possible. Then, when it comes time to delegate, at least half the problem is solved.

The Mysteries of Measuring. *How to manage it when you can't rely on measuring it.*

We have to cease being mesmerized by the numbers and stop letting the hard information drive out the soft, instead combining both whenever possible. Every manager has to find his or her own balance, not least by ensuring enough of each kind of information to check out the other.

People Conundrums

The Enigma of Order. *How to bring order to the work of others when the work of managing is itself so disorderly.*

So how is a manager to deal with this conundrum? Like all the others: by nuancing its two sides. He or she has to weave back and forth between letting the chaos reign and reining in the chaos.

The Paradox of Control. *How to maintain the necessary state of controlled disorder when one's own manager is imposing order.*

Sophisticated managers can turn the tables and promote change up the hierarchy. And managers at more senior levels can help by appreciating the consequences of passing down problems that are essentially theirs to resolve.

The Clutch of Confidence. *How to maintain a sufficient level of confidence without crossing over into arrogance.*

Honest friends and advisers can help a manager avoid the Clutch of Confidence. Perhaps the key to dealing with this conundrum is to ensure that more people who are confidently modest end up in management positions in the first place.

Action Conundrums

The Ambiguity of Acting. *How to act decisively in a complicated, nuanced world.*

The trick is to know when to wait despite the costs of delay, and when to act despite unforeseeable consequences. And for that there is no manual, no course, not even any convenient five easy steps — just good, informed judgment.

The Riddle of Change. *How to manage change when there is the need to maintain continuity.*

The trick is to get the balance right.

Author Chester Barnard said that “executive work is not that of the organization, but the specialized work of

Management Can't Be Taught

Management is a practice. Some of the best managers/leaders have never spent a day in an MBA classroom, while no shortage of the worst managers sat there obediently for two years.

maintaining the organization in operation.”

This means keeping the organization on track and getting it back on track when it goes off, alongside improving the track when necessary and sometimes building a new track to a different place.

Overall Conundrums

The Ultimate Conundrum. *How can any manager possibly cope with all these conundrums concurrently?*

These paradoxes and predicaments, labyrinths and riddles, are built into managerial work — they *are* managing — and there they shall remain. They can be alleviated but never eliminated, reconciled but never resolved. To try and escape them is to fall into the managerial dogma of which we have had more than enough already. Managers have to face them, understand them, reflect on them, play with them.

My Own Conundrum. *How do I reconcile the fact that, while all of these conundrums can be stated apart, they all seem to be the same?*

Maybe these are all just one great big jumbled management conundrum. In that case, you needn't be bothered by the previous, ultimate conundrum — just all the ones that preceded it. ●

Managing Effectively

So how should managers be developed? In 1996, some of the professors at McGill University in Montreal had serious reservations about MBA programs.

They teamed up with colleagues from around the world to create the International Master's in Practicing Management. This set the groundwork for a series of initiatives that followed. All of this can be thought of as *natural development*:

1. Managers, let alone leaders, cannot be created in a classroom. If management is a practice, then it cannot be taught as a science or a profession.

2. Managing is learned on the job, enhanced by a variety of experiences and challenges. No one practices surgery or accounting without prior training in a classroom. In management, it has to be the opposite.

3. Development programs come in to help managers make meaning of their experience, by reflecting on it personally and with their colleagues. Management development has to be about commitment: to the job, the people and the purpose, to be sure, but also to the organization, and beyond that, in a responsible way, to related communities in society.

4. Intrinsic to this development should be the carrying of the learning back to the workplace, for impact on the organization. Management development should also be about organization development: teams of managers should be expected to drive change in their organization.

5. All of this needs to be organized according to the nature of managing itself — for example, in terms of the managerial mindsets. Most management education and much management development is organized around the business functions. This is fine for learning about business, but marketing + finance + accounting, etc., does not = management. We have more than enough calculating managers already. We need ones who can deal with the calculated chaos of managing — its art and craft — which highlights the importance of reflection, worldliness, collaboration and action.

Managers have to learn primarily through their own efforts. We have seen how this can be facilitated in a classroom, but we have also learned how much more powerful this can be when it happens spontaneously at work, as managers reflect on their experience, learn from each other and together drive improvements in their organizations and societies.

The message is that nothing is quite so powerful, or so natural, as engaged managers who are committed to developing themselves, their institutions and their communities.

People Jams, Not Bear Jams

If management development can become more natural, then surely there is hope for management itself.

We are the species out of control. In the Banff National Park, Gord Irwin describes a “bear jam: a traffic jam caused by a bear.” One ambles down to the highway and the tourists stop — some even get out of their cars to take pictures — while the truckers fume. In the parks, they refer to “managing the natural setting.” But surely this is an oxymoron: That setting managed itself just fine for millennia without our “management.” Now it has “bear management plans”!

If you really want to understand management, then

you would do well to get down on the ground, where the elk graze in the towns and the truckers battle the tourists. Then maybe you can work “up” from there, to the abstractions of management that so mesmerize us — where people earn larger incomes ostensibly because their work is more important but perhaps really because they have to cope with more nonsense, no small measure of it imposed by their own formalized systems.

Supposedly developed to deal with the complexities, perhaps all of this is really a conceptual smokescreen for a species out of control, alien to its own natural environment. The bears know full well that the real problem is “people jams.”

Managing Naturally

What could be more natural than to see our organizations not as mystical hierarchies of authority so much as communities of engagement, where every member is respected and so returns that respect? Sure, we need people to coordinate some of our efforts, provide some sense of direction in complex social systems and support those who just want to get useful work done. But these are managers who work with us, not rule us.

Managing is a perfectly natural act that we make unnatural by disconnecting it from its natural context and then not seeing it for what it is.

To be a successful manager, let alone a great leader, maybe you don’t have to be wonderful so much as more or less emotionally healthy and clearheaded.

By the excessive promotion of leadership, we demote everyone else. We create clusters of followers who have to be driven to perform, instead of leveraging the natural propensity of people to cooperate in communities. In this light, effective managing can be seen as engaging and engaged, connecting and connected, supporting and supported.

We need to rethink management and organization, as well as leadership and communityship, by realizing how simple, natural and healthy they all can be. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Managing*, you’ll also like:

1. ***Leaders at All Levels* by Ram Charan.** Ram Charan takes aim at the current crisis in leadership. He offers a solution that outlines a new model for succession and leadership development.
2. ***Judgment* by Noel M. Tichy and Warren G. Bennis.** Regardless of industry, leaders are remembered for their best and worst judgment calls. It is a leader’s judgment that can determine the fate of the entire organization.
3. ***First, Break All the Rules* by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman.** Great managers know that conventional wisdom about human nature doesn’t hold up. Learn what great managers do differently. Great for executives looking to hire powerful managers.