Book Review on
"The People Principle" by Ron Willingham
(Review by Gary Tomlinson)
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Leadership is the theme for this month's issue of Business Leader magazine. Over the last decade I have read dozens of books on leadership. A few of my favorites are *Flight of the Buffalo* by James Belasco and Ralph Stayer, *Leading Change* by John Kotter, and *The Leadership Pill* by Ken Blanchard and Marc Muchnick. However, the most influential book that I have read on leadership and my pick for this month's book review is *The People Principle – A Revolutionary Redefinition of Leadership* by Ron Willingham.

What is the People Principle? It's simply this: ***"People are more important than processes."*** "Processes don't produce, people do. Processes don't think, feel, or create. People do. Before processes can improve, people must improve." Willingham goes on to say that, in his opinion, "***flat productivity*** is the greatest business crisis in the world right now."

"In the last decade, billions of dollars have been spent on process improvement and reorganization, most of which generally failed to achieve the desired increases in productivity. Sadly, the result was fear, distrust, paranoia, and low employee and manager morale." Willingham goes on to say that "business's greatest blunder of the last decade has been the belief, backed by billions of dollars invested, that technology and organizational strategies would solve the problem of flat productivity. They didn't!"

He says that the reason is painfully simple. "Those strategies overlooked the most basic factor in success: the productive potential of people. Processes and organizational strategies don't produce, people do. But they only do it in the right environment, with positive leadership. Leaders who exhibit strong, positive values in their lives enable their people to be more productive. People's job performances are influenced by their leaders' beliefs." Willingham has often noticed that leader's and manager's beliefs about people become self-fulfilling prophecies. Employees unconsciously pick up their leader's and/or manager's beliefs in them and react accordingly. Willingham calls this the Law of Limited Performance. It's as follows:

> "People soon discover the level of performance their managers will settle for, and then gravitate to that level. Managers then assume that's all that people are capable of achieving, so they accept it as fact and quit challenging their people to do better. So both reinforce what the other believes."

To increase productivity significantly in the years ahead, Willingham says that leaders and managers must learn about and maximize the vast, yet latent pool of potential in their people, a pool that's currently unchallenged and untapped. He says that most leaders and managers "aren't trained to know how to plug in to the powerfully creative dimensions of human potential. They know about numbers, budgets, logical stuff, but very few are prepared for the important role of building people. A few do it naturally; most don't."

The People Principle brings these powerful messages to you, along with understanding how to create the proper environment so people discover and actualize more of their vast creative potential. And when they do, they will approach their jobs with more joy and productivity. "Managers will see significant increases in bottom lines while at the same time experiencing more harmonious work environments and higher employee satisfaction and loyalty. This in turn will prepare the foundation for stronger customer satisfaction and loyalty." This book is aimed at the greatest single need in organizations today – ***how to help people become their best!*** In Willingham's book you'll learn:

- Why 80 percent of your people are performing far below their capabilities right now, and what to do about it.
- How to create an environment in which people perform their best.
- Practical models, strategies, and ideas that will strengthen your leadership skills.
- How to foster high achievement drive and motivation in your people.
- Why ethical, value-driven behaviors are good for business.

Whether you manage two people or two thousand, in a small business or a Fortune 500 company, Ron Willingham's book will help you maximize your employees' productivity. In every chapter he will lead you through processes and action guides that, if you learned and practiced, will help you discover the most important element of being an effective leader – **a leader who knows how to help people become their best.**

Enjoy this month's selection, *The People Principle – A Revolutionary Redefinition of Leadership,* and share it with others in your life because as Alvin Toffler says; *"The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."*