



Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters

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How is Saddam Hussein like Tony Blair? Or Kenneth Lay like Lou Gerstner? Answer: They are, or were, leaders. Many would argue that tyrants, corrupt CEOs, and other abusers of power and authority are not leaders at all--at least not as the word is currently used. But, according to Barbara Kellerman, this assumption is dangerously naive. A provocative departure from conventional thinking, *Bad Leadership* compels us to see leadership in its entirety. Kellerman argues that the dark side of leadership--from rigidity and callousness to corruption and cruelty--is not an aberration. Rather, bad leadership is as ubiquitous as it is insidious--and so must be more carefully examined and better understood. Drawing on high-profile, contemporary examples--from Mary Meeker to David Koresh, Bill Clinton to Radovan Karadzic, Al Dunlap to Leona Helmsley--Kellerman explores seven primary types of bad leadership and dissects why and how leaders cross the line from good to bad. The book also illuminates the critical role of followers, revealing how they collaborate with, and sometimes even cause, bad leadership. Daring and counterintuitive, *Bad Leadership* makes clear that we need to face the dark side to become better leaders and followers ourselves. Barbara Kellerman is research director of the Center for Public Leadership and a lecturer in public policy at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters Details

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Lee says

I read this book after hearing Barbara Kellerman speak at a conference. I appreciated her candid presentation then, and I enjoyed that same candor in her writing.

Granted, this book is more a compilation of research and historical reference to demonstrate a point, more than it is revelatory; but having the information assembled in this way offered a refined perspective on how bad leadership comes to be. I also value the idea that bad leaders can't be leaders without the followers that often get overlooked in the considerations of how bad someone's leadership is; and the spectrum of seven different types of bad leadership created an interesting foundation for discussion.

The only thing I found challenging was the repetition, especially in the final chapters of the book. In making recommendations and offering possible solutions for avoiding bad leadership, there was a lot of restating of information from the seven case studies - as if she didn't trust the readers to make those connections themselves.

Ariel says

I read this book intrigued by the idea of negative leadership. I read SOOOOO many books on how to be a good leader, but there are virtually no books on BAD leadership. In fact, this book isn't going to help much either if you're dealing with a bad leader and need advice. It's a description of seven types of bad leaders, with excellent analysis of case studies as examples. The seven types of bad leadership are: incompetent, rigid, intemperate, callous, corrupt, insular, and evil. Obviously, these seven characteristics demonstrate a "bad" leadership that's pretty egregious.

I listen to a lot of audio books but have found that I cannot usually listen to leadership books because they're so loaded with lists and bullet points, and other things I would normally highlight or make notes on. Listening doesn't allow for that type of note-taking. But THIS book would make an excellent audiobook, because the entire middle section is basically stories.

The true value in this book is the last few chapters in which she extrapolates the lessons that leaders can learn from her examples, as well as the lessons that followers can learn and apply it to make sure that the leaders they have in place will never become ineffective, callous, corrupt, or evil. She makes the excellent point that leaders really can only go so spectacularly wrong if the followers do nothing and essentially allow it, if not serve as acolytes sharing in the culpability.

Simon says

This is a good history lesson on bad leadership. The author uses various examples on what makes a bad leader. Some of the CEOs she mentions were unexpected and their own downfall all led to their own

personal motives.

Muhammad Alhusami says

An interesting book that details 7 types of bad leaders and ends up with some practical pieces of advice about how to stop or slow bad leadership from the point of view of both leaders and followers.

T22hawk says

Reads like a text book.

It was good but the details were more detailed than they needed to be. And the author assumes a few times what is the "right" thing to do for the leader I didn't necessarily agree with.

Faithsalutes says

Could have been 100 pages and been effective...though I do love reading about nut jobs who somehow rise to power.

Lisa says

A fun anthropological/sociological study of bad leaders and the lessons we draw. Also, the last two chapters are worth the price of admission. Really it comes down to us being bad followers. Thinking about being a good follower is something there aren't enough books about.

Ginny Stuckey says

Worth reading. The ideas aren't non-obvious, but (as the author points out) there is value in naming and organizing the known. Kellerman's writing is fantastically frank.

Kamil Salamah says

OUTSTANDING book to learn about a very important and serious mangement problem in companies.

Weylin says

One of my favorite books from grad school to date.

Sandra says

I paid a lot for this book, would have expected more for the \$\$\$. Haven't found it useful yet in my leadership degree. Am hopeful that it does have a use.

Michael Pillarella says

Personally this book was not what I was looking for. I had thoughts that it was going to be more in depth about acknowledging signs of bad leadership with theories on justification behind their choices. I felt as though it was more of a historical lesson on leaders who made poor decisions.

Maxo Marc says

Had some interesting points in it.
