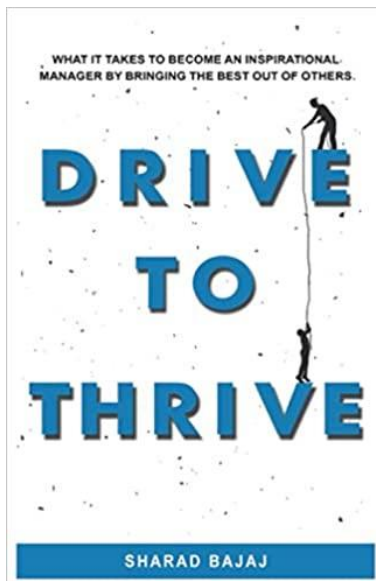




Book Review

Drive to Thrive



Sharad Bajaj

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“Drive To Thrive: What It Takes to Become An Inspirational Manager By Bringing The Best Out Of Others” by Sharad Bajaj draws from his professional experience as a manager at Microsoft and Amazon. It is presented in a format that is easy to read and lends itself to practical application. Each chapter has a summary of the salient points at the end, with a brief exercise that requires the reader to reflect on the material and their respective management styles.

In discussing the roles of a manger, Sharad (2020) categorized these roles into three groups: Interpersonal – the manager acts as a figurehead, personnel liaison, leader; Informational – the manager is a monitor, disseminator; and Decisional – the manager is an entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator. He further notes, these roles as being significant based on one’s management hierarchy in the organization and how they ultimately bring business value that aligns with organizational goals. According to research from the Project Management Institute (2017), three key skill sets required in today’s complicated, diverse and global marketplace include leadership, strategic and business management, as well as technical project management. Though used interchangeably, the word management is more closely associated with directing another person using known set of expected behaviors whereas leadership involves working with others though discussion and an exchange of ideas.

What constitutes good management? Is your organizational structure functional, matrix, project oriented or a composite of these various structures? Are you a functional manager, project manager or hybrid? Do you use all five principles of management – organizing, staffing, influencing, controlling? Bajaj (2020) in the second chapter of his book, clearly conveyed qualities of “the best managers” in any organization. “As a good manager, you must motivate, inspire, and lead through others” (p. 41). Points highlighted include, the best managers are fully vested in their teams’ career, strive for diversity and inclusivity in their team, take responsibility for team successes and failures, display emotional intelligence, create a psychologically safe culture that promotes open communication and strives for continuous improvement, etc. According to the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (2020) organizations should promote psychological safety by creating an environment where people feel comfortable raising concerns and asking questions and have opportunities to do so. Management can achieve this by being approachable, seek to engage all team members, encourage feedback, respond to suggestions as well as respect and value every team member and his or her input.

One of the hurdles, as noted by Bajaj (2020) managers faced in 2020 was managing virtual teams, due to the pandemic. Managers had to deal with new sets of problems like poor communication, employee productivity, fewer resources, and the need to not micromanage, as employees were no longer collocated in an office. Parker, et al., (2020) in an HBR article brings out that “rather than checking up on people as a way to micromanage them, managers need to check in with people and provide them the information, guidance, and support to work autonomously” (p. 8). Having a team charter is invaluable in helping the team establish shared values, conflict resolution, team communication guidelines and tools, decision making guidelines, meeting schedule and practices to help them deliver business value that is aligned with overall organizational goals. Bajaj (2020) highlights the role a manager plays in building team culture that reflects the organizations unique culture and style that represents its cultural norm. This includes diversity, inclusion and belonging (DIB) which help form the foundation of a right culture, as well as growth mindset, psychological safety, teamwork and winning as a team.

Bajaj (2020) viewpoint on work-life balancing being a hoax is quite refreshing. It is not two sides of a coin where one side represents work life and the other personal life. He looks at life as a whole and work as being a part of it. His advice is to live a purposeful life and work at something you are passionate about. This ties in nicely with the concept of “white space” which is time scheduled for reflection and strategic thinking.

Drive To Thrive is a book that the aspiring manager or those already in management will find particularly useful. The author has shared with us what has helped him succeed in management and throughout his career. The lessons include pitfalls to look out for as well as strategies that have proved successful. Today’s business environment requires managers to be adaptive, more agile, and have a leadership style that encourages self-discovery and self-awareness of their team by listening, coaching, and providing a safe environment conducive to growth.

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