



Executive Warfare

By David D'Alessandro

Book Summary:

According to former CEO and Chairman of John Hancock Financial Services and author of *Executive Warfare*, David D' Alessandro, believes the rules are different at the top of the C-Suite and it is not enough anymore to be smart, hard working, and able to show results. At the senior executive level, *all* your peers will be smart, hard working, and able to show results. Instead, it's your relationships with people of influence that sets you apart. These people can include your peers, your employees, your organization's directors, reporters, vendors, and regulators, as well as the people directly above you in the organizational hierarchy. According to the author, in senior management you no longer answer to just one boss. Instead, there is now a convoluted array of constituents both inside and outside the office, any one of whom can derail your career or give you a tremendous push forward. Executive Warfare offers concrete, albeit cynical advice for handling all of these relationships in an effort to propel you up the chain of leadership. D'Alessandro offers ten "Rules of Engagement" for winning your war for success, including how to effectively handle peers, bosses, and rivals. Additionally, chapters describe how to assemble your team and how to position yourself in order to win.

My Take:

D'Alessandro offers some very practical insights in Executive Warfare. It is a quick read, written in an easy style with many humorous stories to illustrate his points. The author will be the first to admit he is direct and his directness casts a shadow over current leadership book trends in that his methods come across (at least to this untrained observer) as reinforcing an old school style of cut-throat leadership. Popular business or leadership books seem to emphasize a humanly ethical, caring style. While the author in no way subscribes to anything less than above-reproach tactics, he seems to support a more impersonal style of relating. It is true that the author suggests incorporating humanity into your leadership process, but the overtone of the book is "take care of yourself" and you and your organization will win. The book was entertaining and worth the read, but be prepared for a cynical, often ruthless presentation of what it takes to be at the top in large, complex organizations.

Reviewed by Tim

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