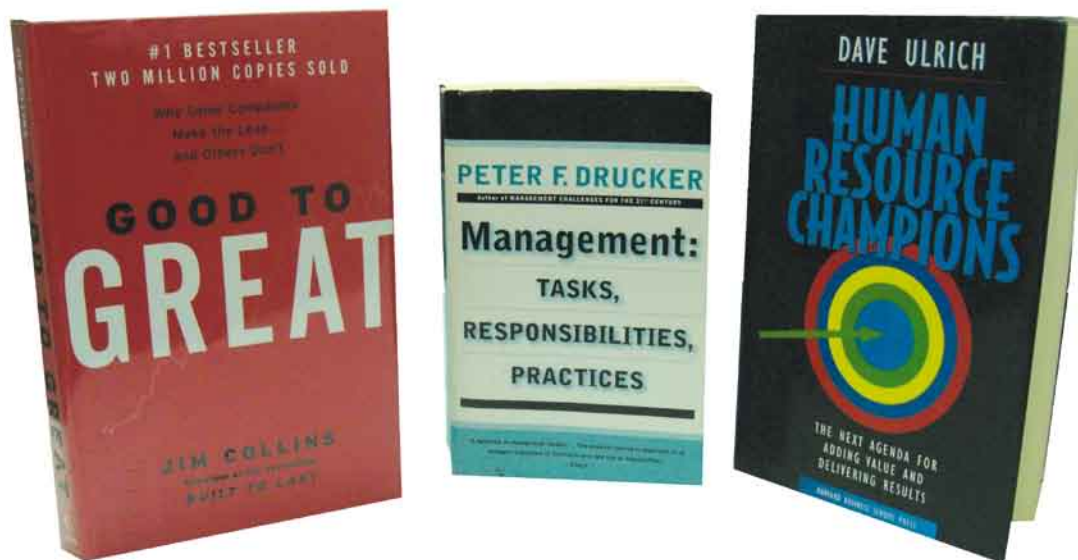




In this month's article, John Murphy takes a look at four books that avoid jargon, hype and buzz words and instead provide real, practical guidance – as well as inspiration – for managers.

# 3000 Management Books A Year... and Counting!

Three thousand management books a year. That's how many are published in the USA alone, according to William Malek, founder of Leadership Development Strategy2Reality, at a recent luncheon of the American Chamber of Commerce in Thailand.



And what was Mr. Malek doing at the luncheon? Giving a presentation on “Developing Strategic Leadership: One Major Key to Talent Retention and Better Business Results.” Oh... and launching his new book on the same subject!

Now, one of the things Mr. Malek mentioned in his presentation was his view that if you took the vast majority of business books and really looked at their content, most of them are really only rehashing some of the fundamental principals propounded for over 40 years ago by Peter Drucker.

I agree. But, his comments got me thinking further and led me to reflect on those books that I believe offer real insight and practical lessons that can be applied to the successful management of a business. Books that do not rely on buzz words or ‘spinning’ the latest management fad to generate reader interest.

So, starting with Peter Drucker himself, I decided to share with you my own ‘desert island’ management booklist. The ‘essential’ library of management books you’d want to bring with you if you were ever stranded in the middle of a wide blue ocean or on a desert island.

Peter F. Drucker – *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*

In a writing career of more than 66 years, Peter F. Drucker published more than three dozen books and, along the way, coined the terms ‘knowledge worker’ and ‘management by objectives’.

I recommend Drucker’s book *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* because in it he covers a great deal of ground in a crisp and often arresting writing style.

Management is an organized body of knowledge. “This book” in Peter Drucker’s words, “tries to equip the manager with the understanding, the

thinking, the knowledge and the skills for today's and also tomorrow's jobs".

The book is a management classic that discusses, in a meaningful and easily accessible style, the tools and techniques of successful management practice that have been proven effective.

The book is serious, lengthy (at 840 pages in my paperback edition), and a very good read. It is serious but doesn't take itself seriously. There is a refreshing absence of jargon, spin or selling. The book is not part of a marketing campaign to sell consulting services, or DVD tutorials or a new 'answer' to managing. It is thorough, well written and a really useful source of reference.

**"No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it. It must be organized in such a way as to be able to get along under a leadership composed of average human beings". Peter F. Drucker**

Jim Collins – *Good to Great*

With over two million copies already sold, this book from the co author of the bestselling *Built to Last* is a revelation. The full title of the book is *Why some companies make the leap...and others don't... Good to Great*.

Peter F. Drucker himself praised the book and it's author with these comments: "This carefully researched and well-written book disproves most of the current management hype – from the cult of the superhuman CEO to the cult of IT, to the acquisitions and merger mania. It will not enable mediocrity to become competence. But it should enable competence to become excellence".

The book poses the question, what are the universal distinguishing characteristics that cause a company to go from good to great?

Using tough benchmarks, Collins and his team identified a set of elite companies that made the leap to great results and sustained these results for at least 15 years. How great? After the leap, the good to great companies generated cumulative stock returns that beat the general stock market by an average of seven times in fifteen years, better than twice the results delivered by a composite index of the world's greatest companies including Coca-Cola, Intel General Electric and Merck.

"Some of the key concepts discerned in the study", commented its author, Jim Collins, "fly in the face of our modern business culture and will, quite frankly, upset some people".

For me, the book is truly thought provoking, with compelling illustrations of the pathway – and pitfalls – on the journey to sustained great corporate performance. It debunks many of the fads and fashions that have emerged over the past 20 years and provides clear and insightful guidance on the key elements found in great organizations.

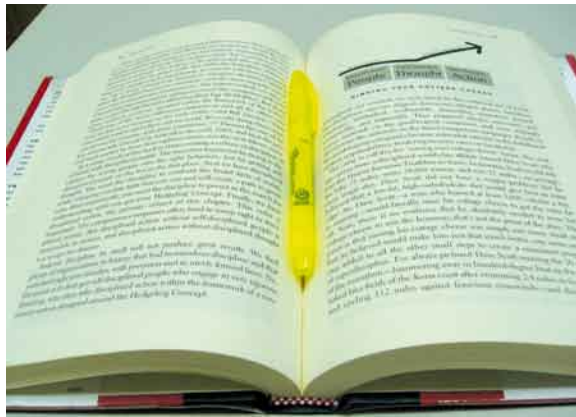
"To go from good to great requires transcending the curse of competence. It requires the discipline to say, 'just because we are good at it – just because we're making money and generating growth – doesn't necessarily mean we can become the best at it.' The good to great companies understood that doing what you are good at will only make you good; focusing solely on what you can potentially do better than any other organization is the only path to greatness". Jim Collins

Dave Ulrich – *Human Resource Champions*

First published in 1996 by Harvard Business School Press, this was a breakthrough publication on the subject of Human Resource Management. But, don't let that put you off.

Ulrich, in writing the book, stated that his aim was, "to turn the prevailing thinking about HR on its side. I want to focus less on what HR professionals do and more on what they deliver. Delivery focuses on the outcomes, guarantees and results of HR work. The book focuses on four generic outcomes: strategy execution, administrative efficiency, employee contribution and capacity for change.

"I believe that the next ten years will be the HR decade. The increased pace of change required by technology, globalization, profitable growth and customer demands places work force competence and organizational



capabilities at center stage... understanding, leveraging, and crafting capabilities and competencies – HR issues – will lead to successful organizations and successful leaders".

It would be hard to overestimate the influence this book has had on the development of the HR function in the past ten years or so since its first publication. Certainly, many more books have taken Ulrich's lead and followed up in developing the themes he introduced.

*Human Resource Champions* is a book for leaders of organizations. It provides a clear overview of the roles, responsibilities

and results associated with effective management of human resources and the appropriate alignment of HR departments. Highly recommended.

Joseph Juran – *The Quality Handbook*

If I could only recommend one book to managers, be they newly appointed supervisors or seasoned CEOs, this would be it. Do not be misled, as I originally was, by the seemingly innocuous title. The Quality Handbook is a publishing colossus, coming in at well over 1,800 pages!

In it Juran provides a clear, articulate and detailed approach to managing for quality results. The book is relevant to all managers, not merely those in the Quality Department. Frank Gryna, Professor Emeritus, described Juran's stellar contribution:

"The Juran trilogy of the three quality processes. The processes show us how to manage quality during operations. The six steps of quality planning help us develop new products or processes; the six steps of quality control explain how to track performance; the nine steps of quality improvement guide us to make breakthroughs to superior levels of performance.

This framework integrates the managerial, technological and statistical concepts of quality. As new concepts evolve, they will easily splice into the trilogy. A structured approach always wins the day over trial and error".

Tom Huizenga, VP at Kelly Services Inc., commented: "Dr. Juran's creation of the universal sequence of events – planning, breakthrough (improvement) and control – as originally written in his book *Managerial Breakthrough*, became the basis for the quality movement in the U.S. and helps make the country competitive in quality in world markets.

His work provided U.S. companies with the understanding of how these sequences are achieved in an organization and how the processes must be managed and understood at the top of the organization. With the addition of the three quality processes of planning, control and improvement (the trilogy), he offered the key to understanding how to manage for quality in today's world and the world of the future".

Both Joseph Juran and W. Edwards Deming made huge contributions to the emergence of Japan as modern industrial powerhouse in the post-war years. In his memoirs, Juran compared their work:

"Deming and I agreed on most fundamentals. We were both crusaders for good quality. We agreed the main quality problems had their origins in the system, not the worker. We deplored the efforts to solve problems by means of colorful banners and slogans. We were aware that leadership in quality must come from top management. We also had our differences. Deming was convinced applying statistical methods was the complete remedy for quality problems. I agreed statistics was an essential element of the remedy, but I knew much more was needed". Joseph M. Juran

And, indeed, much more could be said. However, I hope I have at least given you some food for thought and – perhaps – whetted your appetite for one or more of these great books.

