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**Breakthrough Management Advice Book Offers Powerful New Approach to Leading Knowledge Workers and Achieving Success**

**LEADING GEEKS**

**How to Manage and Lead People Who Deliver Technology**

**Paul Glen**

*From the Foreword*

*“Paul Glen not only tackles a frontier topic in business, but he does so in a way that makes a significant contribution to our understanding not only of “geeks,” but of professional people in general . . . The test of any worthwhile book is that it forces you to stop reading and consider what the author has said. LEADING GEEKS passes this test repeatedly.”*

David H. Maister, author and consultant

The technology bubble may have burst and there may be more dot.gones than dot.coms, but to paraphrase Mark Twain, the demise of the technology professional has been greatly exaggerated. Recent estimates from the Information Technology Association of America reveal that the technology workforce in the U.S. stands at more than 10 million with heated demand for information technology workers from all ends of the spectrum, including technology companies, startups and non-technology companies with heavy information technology needs. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the five fastest growing occupations in the U.S. are in the technology field, and the growth of such jobs is expected to far outpace general labor force growth over the next few years. In fact, an annual CSC survey revealed that only 2.8% of companies were decreasing their budgets for Information Systems in 2001; a full 87.5% of companies are increasing their investments in technology.

In this knowledge-driven, hyper competitive, 24/7 economy, “geeks,” talented technology professionals, are a key weapon in a business’s arsenal, according to Paul Glen, founder of C2 Consulting, a management consulting firm specializing in IT organizations. As technology has become critical to nearly every functional area of businesses, most managers rely on geeks for their success. A self-proclaimed geek, Glen says that managers must not only attract and retain the top-notch geeks but they must also lead them effectively. As a result, a true test for managers is how well

they can attract, hold on to, motivate, manage and lead what is proving to be a highly unusual new species in the workforce. In short, every manager must now be an effective geek leader.

Hailed as arguably the most timely and important new management book, Paul Glen's **LEADING GEEKS: How to Manage and Lead People Who Deliver Technology** (Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer, a Division of Wiley; Hardcover; \$26.95/\$40.50 Canada; November 2002), is the latest book in the much lauded Warren Bennis Signature Series and offers what no other leadership book does: specific advice on managing geeks.

A popular public speaker and educator with more than 15 years experience, Glen is uniquely qualified to provide managers of technology professionals inside corporations or in service provider firms with concrete suggestions and valuable new ways of thinking. According to Glen, the biggest stumbling block to effectively managing technology professionals has been the universalist approach to leadership, in which it is assumed that the role of the leader is the same regardless of the nature of followers. In **LEADING GEEKS**, Glen reveals the three reasons why geeks pose such a challenge for today's managers and why leading them is different from leading others:

- Geeks are different from other employees. The people who are attracted to technical work share a number of traits that are not common in the general population. With a deeply emotional reverence for rationality, geeks often possess an obsession for knowledge, creativity and logic and an expectation of meritocracy in the workplace. Their often direct and honest communication is often regarded as a lack of social skills and their independence and rebelliousness is sometimes misread in the corporate world as disloyalty.
- The intricate, technological, knowledge work geeks do is different from other types of work. What a manager is trying to lead people to do does alter the nature of the relationship.
- Power is useless with geeks. Power is the ability to influence the behavior of others, but geeks don't deliver value through behavior. They deliver value mostly through thought rather than action, so their behavior has relatively little effect on their productivity.

This inability to understand the nature of geeks, their environment or context, including geek group dynamics and the nature of the geek's relationship to their "geekwork," according Glen, is behind the failure of so many managers who try to lead high-tech work. In **LEADING GEEKS**, Glen offers an alternate view of leadership to accommodate the unusual nature of the geek environment, providing a model for understanding the content of geek leadership. In this model, the four responsibilities of the

geek leader, the things they do on a day-to-day basis to energize geeks, enable productivity, and align “geekwork” with the needs of the organization, are:

- **Nurturing Motivation:** In many ways it is easier to de-motivate geeks than it is to motivate them. Motivation to become creatively engaged with a problem cannot come from some extrinsic reward. Geeks must be motivated by a combination of interest in the problem itself and fair external rewards. Good geek leaders work to create environments in which creativity and energy thrive.
- **Providing Internal Coordination:** Since geeks resist hierarchies, and managers cannot know enough about the technical details of a problem, conventional downward delegation often fails. Leaders who accept the role of facilitator often fare better, gaining power by controlling the agenda and the flow of information.
- **Furnishing External Representation:** Geek leaders succeed when they use this function to both align the work of geeks with the needs of the organization and to further the interest of geeks, ensuring that their needs and aspirations become part of the organization’s debate over policy and strategy.
- **Managing Ambiguity:** An ability to be productive in the absence of clarity and help others make sense of their environment and activities lies at the core of a geek leader’s role.

Geeks function at peak efficiency when everything makes sense, when geeks understand the vision, mission and values of their overall organization; can clearly articulate their role within the organization; recognize technology’s part in fulfilling the organization’s goals; and feel that the values of the organization are consistently upheld by leaders and followers alike. Using the principles and models laid out in **LEADING GEEKS**, managers can harmonize content and context in the workplace in order to drive the productivity and creativity of geeks.

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**Paul Glen**

[www.leadinggeeks.com](http://www.leadinggeeks.com)

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