



Leading Geeks: *How to Manage and Lead People Who Deliver Technology*

By Paul Glen.
Jossey-Bass. (800) 988-0886. \$26.95.

If nothing else, *Leading Geeks* should be assured of winning this year's best-title award for a business book. But thanks to author Paul Glen, the book has a lot more going for it than just an eye-catching cover.

Geeks are an organization's knowledge workers, the ones who concern themselves with the creation and maintenance of high technology. According to Glen, with business production increasingly linked to technology, the role of geeks has become more critical than ever.

Glen — who admits belonging to the geek fellowship — devotes the early portion of the book to identifying geek characteristics and describing the nature of geekwork. He maintains that traditional styles of leadership simply won't work with geeks for three reasons: geeks are different from other employees, the technological work that geeks perform is different from other types of work, and power, which forms the basis of many leadership models, is essentially useless when dealing with geeks.

Glen does not completely discard the notion of geek stereotypes, describing geeks as introverts, childlike at times, lacking in self-awareness, and reverent of rational thought. In addition, they are often puzzled by the business environment, have difficulty understanding the culture of groups (other than geek groups) and fail to comprehend the needs of managers and clients. Mix this recipe of personality characteristics together and one begins to understand how managing

geeks becomes an exceedingly tricky undertaking.

In the book's second half, Glen examines the four key responsibilities managers must embrace when leading geeks, including the all-important and "subtle responsibility" of managing the ambiguity so prevalent in geekwork. They may revere logic, but as Glen writes, "geeks are usually uncertain about precisely what they are trying to accomplish and how they are going to go about it."

The book is by turns thoughtful and humorous, and Glen analyzes his subject with the sureness of someone who clearly grasps both sides of an issue. Above all, he never loses his empathy for those individuals charged with the sometimes unenviable task of leading, well, a bunch of geeks.

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