

**The One Thing You Need to Know
(About Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success)**

Marcus Buckingham. (2005). New York: Free Press. (289 pp; Hardcover, ISBN 0-7432-6165-8)

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Key Words: leadership, management

Administrators of volunteer programs are challenged each day to both manage and lead paid and unpaid staff to achieve extraordinary results. More now than ever before, administrators are also being asked to conduct the work of nonprofits in a more business-oriented approach to more efficiently utilize resources, thus the need to look beyond the traditional library of volunteerism and nonprofit management for tools to help guide individuals in the profession of managing volunteers and volunteer programs. My library now includes Marcus Buckingham's latest publication to provide insights that will impact my work with administrators of volunteer programs long into the future.

The author offers that this book is more about "controlling insights" rather than "deep truths" about leadership, management, and individual success (p.13). This publication is much more than "one thing" about each of these constructs, as Buckingham explores concepts, shares case studies, and examines scenarios to aid in the reader's application of the various ideas to the real world of work. It is of note that Buckingham has also co-authored two other bestsellers: *First, Break All the Rules* and *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. This author is considered an expert in the fields of leadership and management and is even being compared to Peter Drucker because of his ability to break these complex concepts into common sense strategies for success.

Buckingham divides the work into two sections with the first focusing on sustained organizational success. This section includes a chapter on understanding the distinct differences between managing and leading, a chapter on great managing, and a chapter on great leading. Section two focuses on sustained individual success and includes some of the best advice, in this reader's opinion, found in the entire publication. In this section I learned about the correlation between discovering what one doesn't like doing and ceasing to do it as an indicator of an individual's capacity to enjoy sustained individual success. This publication provides the author's conclusions and reasoning about what the one thing is for great managing, for great leading, and for sustained individual success. Buckingham accomplishes this by examining myths and sharing case studies to support his findings.

For managers of volunteer programs, this publication presents a tool for creating better management systems within nonprofits. While all of the examples cited are from the business sector, the concepts are valid in the day-to-day operation of any nonprofit. For example, when our staffs, whether paid or unpaid, excel, we as managers experience success and enjoy our work to a much higher degree. By more closely examining the strategies of for-profit business operations, our nonprofit organizations and agencies can build effective operational systems that can more rapidly respond to local needs with appropriate and efficient

services. Personally, I wish I had found this text prior to preparing my statement of philosophy of volunteer administration as it provides a process for more clearly focusing thoughts around leadership and management. I look forward to incorporating the materials contained in this text into future workshops and consultations on management and leadership.

The book includes two things I consider bonuses. One section includes the author's findings related to the one thing you need to know to have a happy marriage --- and it's all about perception, oddly enough. The other bonus is in the conclusion where the author shares with the reader his concept of intentional imbalance, which is quite the opposite of what many of us have learned about success in previous studies. In this section Buckingham ties together the lessons discussed related to leadership, management, and individual success to encourage the reader to take the risk of utilizing these controlling insights to become stronger and more successful in each of these roles.

In the beginning of the book, Buckingham references the movie *City Slickers* in which Curly, a cowboy character played by Jack Palance, tells Billy Crystal's character, an ad executive from the city searching for fulfillment through a dude ranch experience with several friends, that the secret to life is "Just this one thing." Curly holds up his finger explaining that each person has to figure out, on his own, what the one thing is. The author helps us move closer to figuring out what the one thing is in terms of leadership, management, and individual success.

When a book begins with a reference to a summer blockbuster movie from several years ago, you have to ask yourself, "Are you sure this is something you want to read for advice on leading and managing?" I am excited to share that, in spite of my initial hesitation, I forged ahead and was delighted with the insights provided in this easily read, extraordinarily insightful text. This book is "the one thing" you will want to add to your library on the subjects of leadership and management.

About the Author

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