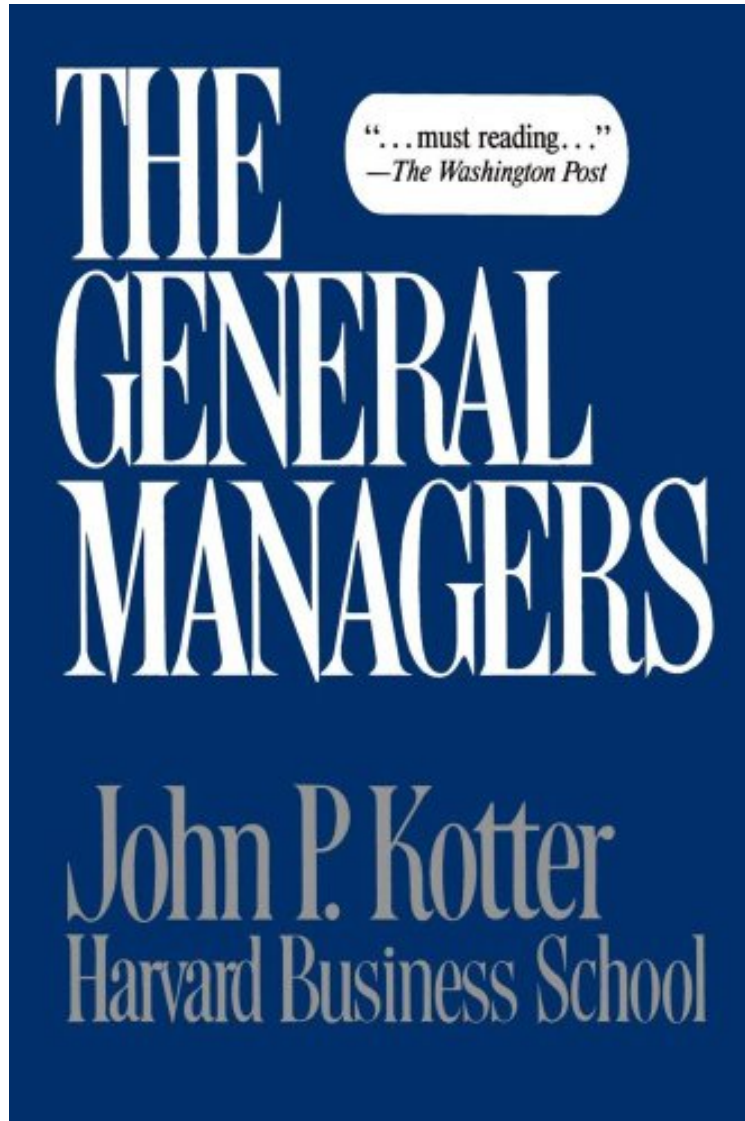


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General Managers

John P. Kotter

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John P. Kotter : General Managers before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised General Managers:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Effective Leadership TechniquesBy Wally BockThis is the book that started it all for Dr. John Kotter. It's still a classic.When Dr. Kotter set out to study general managers there was at least one thing he was pretty sure he'd find. He was sure they'd be great time managers. After all, that was the great management effectiveness builder of the age.Back then, time management was supposed to involve the careful auditing and controlling of time use. Good time managers were expected to carefully plan their days and then rigorously work their plan. But what Kotter discovered was something very different.He discovered that effective

general managers seemed more flexible than their peers. They were constantly engaging in ad-hoc, hallway meetings and using those occasions to convey their important messages. What Kotter had stumbled upon was less a variation in good time management practice than it was an effective communications strategy. Senior managers, indeed, any managers, can only effectively communicate a few important things in the time available. Kotter's general managers knew this. So they made sure they knew what the most important messages were that they needed to get across. They also understood that their important messages needed to be simple and repeated over and over again. They learned to seize whatever opportunities presented themselves and use them to share their key message. Time management has come a long way since this book was written. Just compare any time management book from the 70s with David Allen's "The Art of Getting Things Done." Communications channels have changed as well. Now there is voicemail and email. There are wireless phones, Wi-Fi hotspots, and email-enabled pagers. If the general managers that Kotter studied were dropped into today's world, I'm sure they would face Rip-van-Winkle-like adjustments. They'd have to learn a lot about technology. But they'd still understand the basics of good supervision, management and leadership. That's what this book is about and why it's worth reading.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An excellent field guide to general management! By Lee Say Keng THE GENERAL MANAGERS By John Kotter (JK) GENERAL MANAGERS IN ACTION: POLICIES STRATEGIES by Francis Aguilar (FA) While re-sorting/re-organising my personal library recently, these two books happened to pop out right in front of me. I had owned read them during the mid-eighties when I had just been promoted to General Manager. In fact, they were my constant companions - field guides to be exact - during the nine years when I had held this position with three different firms across three different industries (chemicals manufacturing in Thailand, software development in Singapore, metals trading in Singapore with manufacturing interests in Indonesia). Both authors were known to me as I had read John Kotter (JK)'s 'Power Influence: Beyond Formal Authority' Francis Aguilar (FA)'s 'Scanning the Business Environment' in earlier years. While JK's book was more specific in terms of the vital tasks responsibilities of a GM, particularly from a typical American landscape, FA's book was more broad-based intellectually more stimulating with an added international flavour. Nevertheless, both books were very well-written easy to read. Both my own copies were earlier or first editions. I am gratified to know that newer editions of both books are now available from website. JK's book was based on the author's first-hand observations of fifteen top GMs from nine major companies. He described a typical day in the life of a successful GM. On the basis of his research into the daily behavior of GMs, he identified a dozen of typical patterns, discussed their implications concluded that it was hard to fit the GM's behavior into categories like planning, organizing, controlling, directing, or staffing. He argued that, in order to understand the general managers' behavior it is fundamental to recognize the two fundamental challenges dilemmas in their jobs: 1) Figuring out what to do in the light of uncertainty information anxiety; 2) Getting things done through a diverse group of people in spite of having little control over them; Accordingly, GMs used agenda setting network building to tackle these two challenges. The author further discussed both these tools in detail. He also explained how GMs use their entire networking relationships to implement their agendas. With the author's fascinating portrait of the day-to-day activities of top GMs, I was really glad that I was able to piece together some workable composite ideas for my own career accomplishments. There was, however, only one intriguing point from JK's book. He persuasively argued that the best manager was actually a specialist who had spent most of his career in one industry, learning its intricacies establishing cooperative working relationships. For readers' convenience, I append below the book's table of contents: 1. INTRODUCTION 2. THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT JOBS: KEYS CHALLENGES DILEMMAS 3. THE GM: PERSONAL BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS 4. THE GMs IN ACTION PART II: SIMILARITIES IN BEHAVIOUR 5. THE GMs IN ACTION PART I: DIFFERENCES IN BEHAVIOUR 6. SUMMARY DISCUSSIONS IMPLICATIONS FOR INCREASING GM PERFORMANCE APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDES, QUESTIONNAIRES, RESUMES, APPRAISING GM PERFORMANCE As for FA's book, which was originally intended as a case-study book for advanced management courses, I was able to use it as companion reading to JK's book. Content-wise, it had eighteen classic case studies from a variety of international businesses that illuminate the major decisions of business life the strategies for dealing with specific situations. The author also painstakingly discussed the critical issues faced by most GMs. From this book, I had obtained very clear perspectives on the complex issues of strategic management. The chapter on 'Formulating Strategy', in which the author touched on managing the quality of strategic thinking, was my favourite. For readers' convenience, I append below the table of contents of the book as follows: PART I: THE GENERAL MANAGER 1. THE GM'S JOB 2. STRATEGY THE GM 3. FORMULATING STRATEGY 4. IMPLEMENTING STRATEGY 5. THE GM AS LEADER 6. MEETING THE GLOBAL BUSINESS CHALLENGE 7. CORPORATE FINANCE THE GM 8. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS PART II: CASES ON GENERAL MANAGEMENT, CORPORATE STRATEGY BUSINESS POLICY To conclude this review, I had derived tremendous pleasure from reading both books during the mid-eighties just as they had also provided me with stimulating insights as well as practical guidance about the complexities of general management. That really made my life easier as a GM during those tough nine years. Although the case studies may be dated in today's context, I believe the strategies tools for general management as outlined in the two books are still highly relevant readily applicable.

In this unprecedented study of America's leading executives, John Kotter shatters the popular management notion of the effective "generalist" manager who can step into any business or division and run it. Based on his first-hand observations of fifteen top GMs from nine major companies, Kotter persuasively shows that the best manager is actually a specialist who has spent most of his or her career in one industry, learning its intricacies and establishing cooperative working relationships. Acquiring the painstaking knowledge and large, informal networks vital to being a successful manager takes years; outsiders, no matter how talented or well-trained seldom can do as well, this in-depth profile reveals. Much more than a fascinating collective portrait of the day-to-day activities of today's top executives, *The General Managers* provides stimulating new insights into the nature of modern management and the tactics of its most accomplished practitioners.

The Washington Post ...must reading... Carol T. Schreiber General Electric Company Kotter's landmark portrayal of general managers at work offers new insights about actual managerial performance. He documents the importance of "growing up in a business" for career development and business competence...Most important, by identifying and depicting the most effective managers in his study, he documents the value of different approaches to management. His work represents a monumental contribution to all who educate, advise, select and evaluate general managers -- and to general managers themselves. Andrew Heiskell Former Chairman of the Board and CEO, Time, Inc. Excellent. Kotter is describing the real world of general managers rather than the theoretical portrait which rarely matches any business activity I've ever known. All business school students should read *The General Managers*. Rosemary Stewart Oxford Centre for Management Studies author of *Managers and Their Jobs* This is a path-breaking contribution to our knowledge of the work and behavior of general managers. Most importantly John Kotter analyzes the implications of the differences as well as the similarities in the behavior of general managers he studied. He destroys the myth of the professional manager who can be successful in any organization. The Washington Post Well-documented, powerful, thorough...valuable for aspiring managers...must reading for board members and owners of companies looking for leaders. From the Back Cover In this unprecedented study of America's leading executives, John Kotter shatters the popular management notion of the effective 'generalist' manager who can step into any business or division and run it. Based on his first-hand observations of fifteen top GMs from nine major companies, Kotter persuasively shows that the best manager is actually a specialist who has spent most of his or her career in one industry, learning its intricacies and establishing cooperative working relationships. About the Author John P. Kotter is Chairman of the Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management Area at the Harvard Business School. The winner of two McKinsey Awards from the Harvard Business School, he is the author of six books, including *Power and Influence* (also published by The Free Press).