How F*cked Up Is Your Management?: An Uncomfortable Conversation about Modern Leadership

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This book has swears. Any honest discussion of management today needs a few. And it's just what you'd expect from the creators of the internet famous blog, The Co-pour.

If you're trying to lead a group of people today, the bad news is that it's harder than ever. Your employees have impossible expectations of you, and your investors haven't operated a business in over twenty years. The good news is that there's hope. You can be the leader your people need, but you won't get there without some discomfort.

*How F*cked Up Is Your Management* tackles a massive gap in the conversation about modern leadership. Through personal narrative, and candid storytelling, Melissa and Johnathan Nightingale distill the lessons they've learned and the mistakes they've made into a new management standard.

This book doesn't gloss over the hard work, uncertainty, and stress that it takes for startups to get things right. It doesn't glorify those things either. In addition to the swears, this book has thoughtful things to say on:

What to do when you double in size but haven't doubled your output How to interview better, hire smarter, and grow and retain the people you've already got Why meritocracy doesn't work and other cultural traps How to build a non-toxic workplace culture and a diverse team Why you don't want superheroes on your team (and definitely don't want to be one) How to manage an employee up and when to manage them out What to do when it all falls apart

How F*cked Up Is Your Management?: An Uncomfortable Conversation about Modern Leadership Details

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Mark Mzyk says

I picked up How Fucked Up Is Your Management assuming it would be a quick and easy read, at it is. It's adapted from a blog and it shows in that the chapters are short, self contained, and generally to the point.

If you've been around tech and management for a while, it's likely a lot of this isn't new, but it is presented in an accessible format. As an engineering manager, it was useful for me to get reminders of things that I know but have forgotten. It was also great to get insight into ways I might adapt my approach and get better. But due to the bite size nature, no one topic gets a deep treatment.

The chapters are divided into sections, but I didn't really find the sections meaningful. It just felt like the chapters were loosely grouped to try and convey an overall theme. I think the sections could have been dropped.

The book does harp on the importance of diversity - and it very well should. This topic matters and the fact that it continues to show up through out the book shows how interconnected to things it is. As the book makes clear - and as I believe - it's important for those of us in leadership positions to do our part to make tech a better place. If we don't insist on it it won't happen and we'll all be worse for it.

I did find the chapter on performance plans to be very good and useful; this isn't something that gets as much coverage in management literature. Finally, the last chapter rang true for me: to succeed, you have to put in the work.

Hasitha says

Highly recommended for new and experienced managers alike

There's so much packed into these 40 chapters. They are bite sized and I always discover something new to try or tweak whenever I re-read. Can't recommend enough!

Melissa Morris says

This was an interesting, quick read. Some parts were less applicable to me because they were aimed at HR roles or executives, but I found the chapters about management useful. What I enjoyed most about this book was its focus on diversity. There are many chapters about challenges that women (or other minorities) face specifically in a tech startup environment which spoke to me. For example, the idea that yelling is somehow acceptable but crying isn't, and how ridiculously gender bias that notion is. I did skip a few sections that weren't relevant to myself, like maternity leave, etc, but overall I'm glad I picked this up.

Amanda Munday says

This is an easy read, but not entirely pleasurable. You might get angry. At the state of your own organization, or that a book like this even exists. I sped through it with many "YES!" and "Right!?" reactions. If your leadership is open to exploring without being offended by the title, it's definitely worth sharing. A lot of the lessons are reflective of the tech community, but can be applied to any time of corporate leadership.

Mike Gunderloy says

You can read the title two ways: "how fucked up are these idiots I report to" or "how fucked up is my own management style". I think the second reading is much more productive. From the editors of The Co-Pour (https://mfbt.ca/), (and a lot of the content started there), this book takes a hard look at some common management and geek ideas and rethinks them. Think you're doing enough for diversity? Think your unlimited vacation policy is a benefit? Think again.

Marta Kule says

Required reading for anyone in tech, manager or not. Super candid, backed up by evidence and the authors' professional experience. Straightforward about ugly topics: fear of asking about parental leave, firing people, dismissing candidates based on gender, facing your employees in a crisis, or dealing with staff telling you secrets you're legally obliged to report.

The books is mostly based on the authors' Medium blog, *the co-pour*, and my favourite chapters all happen to be online:
? how to ask for a raise: talk about compensation review instead
? how to advance in your career: make real effort to understand the business you're in
? why not and how not to gossip at work

So highly recommended!

Becks says

Read this book. Easily the most *human* management book I've read, and a wakeup call for all the startups that think management is unnecessary. Less a series of "how tos" than important things to reflect on as a manager of people or a leader in an organization. Read it even if you're not a manager yet to better understand what you should be expecting from your own leadership.

Sebastian Gebski says

No starred review.

Why so? This book is very little on management, very much on diversity, especially very much about females in engineering. I am ALL for, up to the degree where I actually do set myself goals regarding women recruitment, etc., BUT I cannot stand some of attitudes & "narrations" represented by so-called Social Justice Warriors (can't tell whether this is a pejorative term these days or not ...). To be frank, I consider some of the people quoted & praised for their social activity on the topic simply toxic. And that's the least harsh word I could use here.

What else? Book is focused mainly on startup ("bro-") culture, some of the points are very valid, but the actual substantive value is ... limited. I don't know - maybe the diversity-related value is a good justification (for some) to consider this book important, but personally I don't think this book helps. Personally I don't even think it uses the good approach, but OTOH I don't live in San Francisco, I don't even live in US, maybe I don't know US specifics on that.

That's why it's much safer (in my case) to avoid discreet rating. But honestly - I can't recommend this book.

Piotr Stapp says

Some stories are great, a lot of them are useful. But this book is too American, too Silicon Valey for me.

Gaelan D'costa says

Context: I'm an intermediate software developer who isn't actively striving towards management positions, but is interested in both
1. developing himself in his field and his senioriy
2. making his work environment, and from there his world, a more inclusive space.

I'm also a visible minority dude, which is slightly relevant in that I'm somewhere between the audiences that either author is comfortable addressing.

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Anyway, I thought this was a good book in a bunch of ways for my context:
1) It was short, it was concise, each essay in this collection ended with a focused conclusion
2) As a person who is interested in becoming more senior but doesn't have comprehensive guidance on how to be so, this book was really instructive on what people in management (people in management I would gravitate towards) are looking for.
3) Even if I'm not intending to be a manager, part of being a senior at a company (and part of being responsible, and part of being professional, and something I'd like to do for companies I enjoy working in and believing in) is that I should know how and when to step up and contribute my part, even if that means doing low-key leadership things in small day-to-day moments.
4) It's a good introduction to the frameworks of thinking one needs to get into if issues of diversity, accessibility, accomodating people outside my known experience as a single almost-young PoC dude with the things they need and are worried about and value that I'm not necessarily aware of.

I am not a startup employee (I quickly tired of that) and I am not a manager, so in some way I escaped (for now) the central promise of the book, that so many of the seemingly inviolate and glorified values of silicon valley startup culture and the entrepreneur myth are oversold at best and toxic at worst. I imagine, however, that should I find myself in a position of leadership, I will become frustrated that I have been told that the seemingly easy options I could take (and which seem like the paths of least resistance) do not in fact work.

The book is divided into four(?) sections, with the essays in each section revolving around the section's theme. The two authors have consistent, although very different styles, which is somewhat jarring except that it's also clear that they're speaking to different audiences and are speaking from their particular vantages, which are complementary but are clearly two different lived experiences.

The book in many ways was not directly intended for me, which is fine, and in fact the book constantly refers sources closed to subjects the authors want to bring up but don't necessarily feel any authority to speak about with their own voices (issues of being PoC, for example.). I sometimes felt like I was grasping at straws as the book focused on either women in tech, or founders/corporate leaders, or people with who have not ever lived outside the traditional locus of power in north america (affluent local entrepeneurs of european descent), but it was good to see some attempt from people with experience in the nuts and bolts of management (not pure founders, not pure advocates, not people speaking entirely about the particulars of Silicon Valley) speak about their day-to-day work furthering a better corporate world than the horror stories one reads about.
But even with that, a partially illuminated world is better than one completely in the dark. It gives me, an indvidual contributor, tools and indicators to watch for in environments I work at now and those I will consider working at in the future. It gives me at least a starting framework for how I should conduct myself, or at least things I should unlearn or avoid.

I was hoping this book would also spend some time focusing on how to affect change when you do not hold all the control in your grasp, but this book does not really deal with trying to influence your peers or your leadership, but instead focuses on your reports and people who look up (hierarchially or at least in terms of leadership) to you. I felt that was a sorely missing topic in this book, and was my only content-based feeling of disappointment from the book.

Jakub says

Lots of people might not agree with me, for me this book is solid 5 stars.

It talks about really important aspects not only of management abut also of being human. For sure there are people out there who "already know this stuff". For every "I know it" there are 10000 "i didn't know it."

However, you need to come to this book with open mind. Think before attacking.

Szymon Kulec says

Interesting stories from managing companies (mostly, Mozilla). Some of them are personal, representing authors point of view, some of them are more general. It's one of these books that doesn't provide any breakthroughs, but it's easy to read and follow, even when it touches hard topics. If you skip it, the world will

keep spinning.

Joe Wegner says

This was an excellent book, and something I will gladly keep on my desk for the foreseeable future. Many of the articles in the book were immediately impactful, and led to copious notes and lengthy introspection. Some articles were not so relevant currently, but were similarly wise and have been mentally noted as a reference point when I do eventually approach a management struggle that they referenced.

Very good book!

Jason Adams says

The emphasis is on "your"

Don't be confused by the title. This is not a book about other people's management, it's about you. There are a lot of hard truths in this book, whether you choose to face them or ignore them. Even if you are not a manager yourself (as I am not), it offers a lot of insight into the struggles and mistakes we all make in whatever leadership roles we take on. Bonus: it's an easy and entertaining read, even when it hits too close to home.

Meredith Edwards says

Very good. Melissa's chapters are my favorite chapters. Best advice: stop trying to be a superhero. Don't hire people who brag about thriving in chaos because they're actually creating unnecessary chaos. And: when you give someone critical feedback, explain the negative effect their actions are having on the company!