

Shakespeare in Charge: The Bard's Guide to Leading and Succeeding on the Business Stage

by Norman R. Augustine, Kenneth L. Adelman

What do you get when you cross two leaders—one in business (Augustine), the other in government (Adelman)—with arguably the most influential bard in history? A fun and informative look at business, life, and, of course, Shakespeare.

Augustine and Adelman have modeled *Shakespeare in Charge*, appropriately, after a typical Shakespeare play. The authors use the prologue and epilogue to make a case for learning present day lessons from very old plays and applying those lessons to life—not just business. If you read nothing but these two sections, you'll be better for it.

If you're a reader of leadership books, you've probably heard all the lessons before: have a clear mission, be a decisive leader, stick to core competencies, manage by walking around, be flexible, have corporate succession plans, make back up plans, and keep business meetings brief. But I bet you haven't heard them quite like this!

As in Shakespeare's plays, the heart of the book is broken into five Acts. Each Act is a study of a character from one of the bard's plays and is followed by "Acting Lessons" which draw on scores of present day business examples to further illuminate the points made. The characters examined are:

- Henry V (Henry V, leadership);
- Petruccio (Taming of the Shrew, change);
- Caesar, Cassius, Brutus, & Antony (Julius Caesar, "making your play in business");
- Portia (Merchant of Venice, risk management);
- and Claudius (Hamlet, crisis management).

I was pleasantly surprised by the characters they chose, particularly by bringing light to the important role of Portia and, more surprisingly, by drawing important lessons from Hamlet's usurping uncle Claudius. While each Act has a primary character, the authors borrow freely from other plays and some sonnets.

You certainly don't need to be a Shakespearean scholar (or even a Shakespearean student!) to understand, appreciate, and enjoy the lessons to be learned. Augustine and Adelman do an incredible job giving enough background and quotations to make you feel at home.

Shakespeare in Charge cites dozens of real-life business examples some as well known as Amazon.com, Southwest Airlines, and Coca-Cola; and less known ones such as Half Price Books, Mine Safety Appliances Company, and Rachel's Bus Company. A product of the time it was published, they even praise the leadership of Enron.

Having earned my MA in Organizational Leadership, I've read many books on leadership. It was obvious to me that the authors had leadership experience because they mixed "subordinate buy-in" and "consulting advisors" with "decisive leadership" and the importance of a "single leader." Many tend to stress either participation and teamwork or strong individual leadership. They do a great job of advising both.

Shakespeare in Charge doth serve its proposed purpose. Methinks this dost make a fine tome!

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