



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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# The Stepping Stone

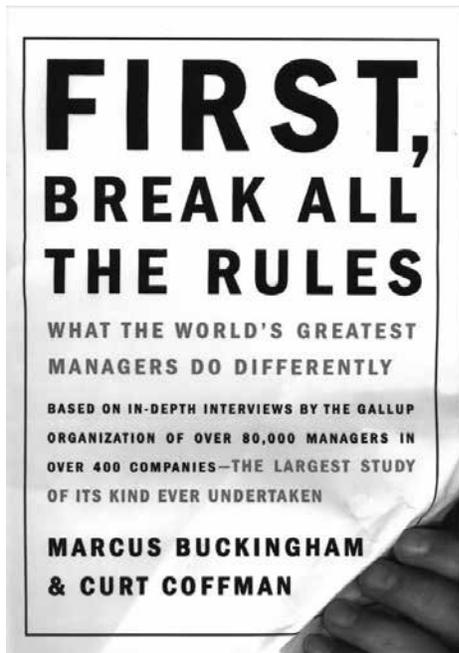
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## BOOK REVIEW:

# First, Break All the Rules:

## What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently, by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman<sup>1</sup>

Review by Raj Johri



The idea that no two successful managers are alike isn't a new one, but nowhere has it been so vividly illustrated and forcefully propagated as in *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*, by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. Every manager dreams of the utopian workplace, the metaphorical “finely tuned watch” with all its different cogs linking effortlessly with one another. This book will show you how to turn that vision into a reality.

his/her talent. By encouraging your subordinates to do what they do best, you've managed to lift their morale, and also increase the overall productivity of your team.

The book is a product of 25 years of research by the Gallup Organization, of which Buckingham and Coffman are a part. Eighty thousand managers and 1 million employees from 400 companies have been interviewed, and all their insights and perspectives have received due consideration, making the book a truly unbiased read.

What really floored me was the book's presentation. Its language is simple, and written from the point of view of a manager, rather than a management “guru.” There is a sincere and real-world feel to it, and whether you're a team leader in a big corporation, or the owner of a small establishment, you will be able to relate directly to some of the situations and concepts expressed by the many interviewees. However, it's not meant as a textbook. What it contains is insight. If you find an idea that you like, the authors want you to try fitting it into your managerial style instead of copying it outright. Like the book says, good management demands a “willingness to individualize.” ●

Managers are often (wrongly) considered inferior to leaders. This book strongly refutes that hypothesis, describing the two profiles as being poles apart. You may be the visionary of your workplace, but unless you know how to get the most out of your subordinates, you are unlikely to ever succeed as a manager. Buckingham and Coffman highlight the role that management can play, not only in hiring employees, but in retaining them as well.

According to the writers, the central idea that most successful managers seem to agree upon is that good management always chooses talent over skill or experience. That talent is then encouraged in the employee, by giving strength-specific tasks. A good manager focuses on the expectation, rather than the course of action. Buckingham and Coffman also put forth a new idea for promoting deserving employees. Instead of the usual “ladder-climb,” they suggest creating a niche for the employee, specific to

### END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Simon & Schuster, 1st edition (May 5, 1999), 255 pages.



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