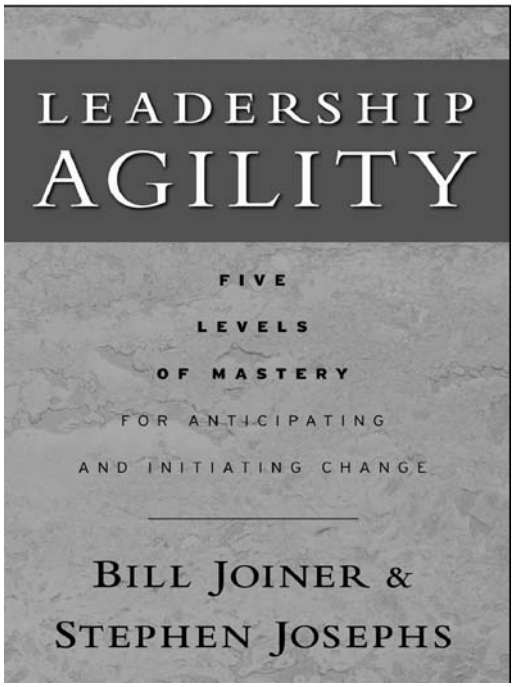
Leadership Agility

Five Levels of Mastery for Anticipating and Initiating Change

by Bill Joiner & Stephen Josephs,
2006, Jossey Bass



Stephen Josephs is an executive coach, and psychodramatist trained by Ann Hale (Sociometrist, TEP who studied with Moreno). I met Stephen earlier this year in San Francisco, where we shared stories of our coaching work with leaders and what we both noticed with stages of personal development of executives. We had a really stimulating time together. It was then he let me know he was in the final stages of writing this book with Bill Joiner, a colleague from Boston University. 'Leadership Agility' was released by Jossey-Bass in October and I had the pleasure of receiving the final draft a month earlier.

Reviewed by Diana Jones

Throughout the book Josephs and Joiner work with a number of frameworks as tools to explore leadership development. Their approach of working outside-in and inside-out present leadership practices is attractive and focuses on three areas: pivotal conversations, team initiatives and organisation initiatives. In doing this, they accept and work with the complexity of the relationship between individual leaders and their organisations. The authors weave this framework together with the five levels of leadership agility: leadership, expert, achiever, catalyst, co-creator, and synergist.

Defining leadership agility as "the ability to lead effectively under conditions of rapid change, and mounting complexity", Josephs and Joiner bring to life the shifting focus of leaders moving from being subject matter experts to engaging with people in worthwhile experiences.

A book written by a psychodramatist (Josephs) must surely reflect the method. While I missed references to role theory, more satisfying is the 'reverse role play' descriptions, interviewing for a role, and reflective action. This book will sit well with leaders who receive feedback on areas to develop but are then given little direction as to 'how' or 'what abilities' to work on, and with psychodramatists working in executive development.

Stories of success and American companies leave me cold, as many do in this book, however some of the personal stories are compelling and emphasise social atom repair. "... Before I knew

it I was yelling back at Craig at the top of my lungs. ... I'd never been attacked like that or reacted like that in a public forum. When I left the room, I was breathing hard and my hands were shaking. I went into the men's room, and just stood there. I didn't try to shut down all the churning, but by being mindful of it I stopped feeding it, and it gradually subsided. It hit me that I've carefully lived my life to avoid getting upset and I wondered what it's cost me to do that." Emphasising the value of reflection, insight and action, Joiner and Josephs use their stories to display personal development and learning many can relate to.

Helpful and relevant, the book has a good mix of stories, data, concepts and ideas that relate strongly to leadership and psychological development. There is a level of detail within the book which stimulates a 'paint by numbers' invitation for emerging leaders rather than leadership development professionals. However there are a number of gems for the latter, particularly those working as executive coaches. The detail in 'Notes for Enquiring Readers' reflects the extensive research and experience these authors bring. While I was disappointed to see neither Moreno's work, nor that of any psychodramatist referenced, the familiar names of leadership aficionados such as Ken Wilber, Rosabeth Moss Canter, Jim Collins and Edgar Schein offer rich musings. •

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