

The No-Nonsense Guide to Leadership, Management and Team Working

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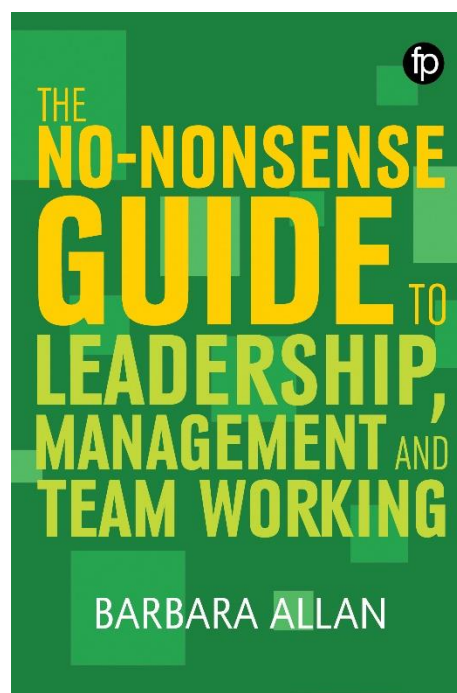
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When I was offered the chance to review a book called [*"The No-Nonsense Guide to Leadership, Management and Team Working"*](#) I was immediately interested and keen to start reading. As a new manager nearing the end of my second year in the role, while I've almost completed my University's management development programme (which has been very helpful), I have found that training and information on this subject can be heavy on the theory and not always totally suitable for a library context.



I was hoping the book's claim that it provides a "straightforward and pragmatic guide to leadership, management and teamwork in contemporary library and information services" would be correct.

Barbara Allan's background experience in Libraries, education and business schools seems well suited to this subject. She has written

several other books for Facet (CILIPs publishing arm) on project management, learning and teaching, research student support and supervising and leading teams, some of which have also been part of the “No-nonsense” series. I have not read any of these titles so I’ve judged this book very much on its own merit.

Each chapter of the book focuses on a general area relating to leadership and management.

The scope is wide and chapters span material aimed at the brand new or not yet started manager, to guidance on quite high level strategic leadership. It covers everything from budgeting to managing a virtual team to PRINCE2® to performance reviews (and everything in between, including crowdfunding and how to network at cocktail receptions!).

Obviously leadership and management is a huge topic in itself, even we if we just look at it in a library and information management context, and as I began to read I was worried it would all be a bit “once over lightly”. And it is, but in the best possible way and in serving its intended audience, probably really couldn’t be otherwise.

This is because the book’s promised pragmatism is definitely rooted in an understanding of the huge variety of library management roles out there. For instance the Strategic Leadership chapter addresses managers leading whole public Library systems, to those working as part of a parent organisation such as universities and schools to solo librarians. Solo librarians are even treated to a small section on strategic planning just for them, addressing the difference in scale. In this chapter there are case studies from university, public and school libraries, as well as the National Library of Scotland and ALA.

The wide scope again reflects pragmatism in that many managers are specialists with management responsibilities as only part of the role, and these responsibilities could include management of work, people and physical space. This means the content is very diverse and meant for me there were some sections I only skimmed through such as those relating to planning for incidents/emergencies and recruitment. As I work in a university library service, these procedures are in line with wider institutional policies. However, I'm sure for other readers in smaller libraries this could be really useful.

The book is short (245p) and this makes it accessible and quick to read and refer to, but given the wide scope also means that some sections or subjects lack a little depth. However Allan doesn't waste too much time on theory, instead giving a clearly explained and referenced theoretical underpinning and back ground. She then provides charts and diagrams that translate theory into possible practice and many of these are either given as examples or as templates for the reader to use or adapt. There are often list of ideas to try or questions the reader can use for reflection on their practice or workplace. Each chapter has a short summary and a list of references and further reading and many of these point to practical "how to" type resources, as well as opportunities to explore aspects of the subject in more depth if desired.

Again, this is useful for those who must have other parts of their role aside from management. The book focuses on giving you quick practical advice and clear guidance to help you become an effective leader and manager. For instance there is a helpful checklist provided for to examine your practices in terms of diversity and inclusion for your communities, the profession and your physical and digital spaces. These closed questions are clear and give you an action to take, for instance, if

you answered no to “do we use Universal Design principles when producing content” or “are we promoting books, articles, videos and other resources by and about people in marginalised groups”.

Overall I found it a very accessible book, in that it’s not difficult to read, and structured so you could read it at length or dip in and out. Another feature of its accessibility is its wide scope in subjects, sectors and level of management experience. I think most readers will see themselves or their libraries reflected and represented in the book. The author and her personal experience and context is British, but case studies are included from other countries and Librarians in other regions could easily use this book.

While I think I’ve made it clear that I don’t consider the huge range of topics and contexts addressed within leadership and management a weakness, the book may be less helpful if you are looking for a deep dive into a particular aspect of the subject eg: teamwork or project management and will really only serve as an introduction or guide to start you off.

The one negative for me is the price. I was given my copy to review and the price of around £49 with a CILIP discount/via Amazon would’ve given me pause if I was looking for a book on this topic, especially seeing many other books (although perhaps not as focused on Librarians) are available for much less.

Despite the price, I’d definitely recommend the book to new and early career managers or those with a supervisory role. It’s worth a read for those who are actively planning to move into management and has

value for experienced managers moving into a new role at a different library, or taking on new or unfamiliar projects, responsibilities or leadership roles. I can see it acting almost like a mentor that you could have alongside you as you grow and change in your career.

I think librarians of all stripes would find it useful and it will be a permanent fixture on my desk for the next few years, as I'll be referring to it very often.

The No-Nonsense Guide to Leadership, Management and Team Working

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