

Reading About Leadership and Book Reviews

By Michael Wyatt, St. Paul District

Reading about leadership and the discussion and preparation of book reviews has become a staple part of the overall Planning Associates Program. The emphasis on reading for personal and professional growth became all too apparent with arrival of a Fed-Ex delivery to each Planning Associate last October containing a small library of books devoted to the subject of leadership. Throughout the course of the year, the Planning Associates are expected to work their way through each book and then summarize each through a short written report before discussing the reading materials as a group. The 2011 reading selection contains the following selection of books:

[*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*](#), by Patrick Lencioni

[*The Three Keys to Empowerment*](#), by Ken Blanchard, John C. Carlos, and Alan Randolph

[*The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*](#), by Malcolm Gladwell

[*Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... And Others Don't*](#), by Jim Collins

[*Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*](#), by Malcolm Gladwell

In my experience, books about leadership tend to generally focus on two major issues or themes: the first theme focuses on organizing a team around mutual goals and second focuses on the importance of maintaining open lines of communication towards achieving those goals.

While these recurring themes are valuable to hear again from time to time, the real value in the group reading exercise comes through discussion with others.

At our team building, team leadership and communication training module held in Fort Lauderdale, FL (see the November 2010 issue of Planning Ahead for a summary of the training module), several of the leadership training sessions were focused on the tenets of the book *Three Keys to Empowerment*.

On a personal level, I didn't find this particular book very interesting, but when we talked about the book as a group the discussion seemed to bring the issues of the book to life. We talked at length about how leadership issues highlighted in the book affect our work, our lives as well as our participation and relation to others in the Planning Associates program. The result was a better understanding of the messages of the book and my fellow Planning Associates.

Being a part of the Planning Associates Program requires a commitment of your time. A significant amount of that time will be spent by Planning Associates traveling, but reading about leadership and preparing book reviews are another example of our time devoted towards the program. Since our inaugural trip to Florida for leadership training, the Planning Associates will have completed reading two more books on leadership and preparing summary reports, tying everything together with conference calls and book discussions. All serve as subtle reminders of our commitment for the coming year, but keeps us focused and coordinating as a group, even when we're spread across the country.

If you have ideas for leadership books that you think would be suitable for future Planning Associates classes, please send your suggestions to: [Joy Muncy](#)