

Book Review on
“Leadership Land Mines”
“8 Management Catastrophes and How to Avoid Them”
by Marty Clarke
(Review by Gary Tomlinson)
Business Leader Magazine – May 2006 Issue

Leadership is that thread of consistency that you weave through every professional decision you make and action you take, no matter how big or how small. Managers make a million decisions and each decision demonstrates leadership or it doesn't. These decisions and these actions build a body of work. It's your body of work that's going to tell the tale, not your current title or the title for which you're aiming. Your title doesn't make you a leader. Your decisions, your actions, your body of work are what make you a leader. That's why, typically, leaders are said to have emerged over time rather than just appear all of a sudden.

The good news is that avoiding the most common and most damaging leadership land mines will have an almost immediate impact on your leadership ability no matter how far along you are on your current path. For these reasons, I have chosen Marty Clarke's *Leadership Land Mines – 8 Management Catastrophes and How to Avoid Them* for this month's book review.

Marty Clarke begins with, “this is the book I wish I'd read the day I got my first management job. In fact, this is the book I wish I had read at any time during my many years I spent in charge of sales, support, and staff teams. But this book wasn't available, so safe to say I had to learn my lessons; step on all the land mines myself. The good news is I was paying attention the entire time. I have boiled the lessons down to the eight most damaging leadership land mines that prevent managers from emerging as true leaders.” Marty's eight leadership land mines are:

1. *It's All about Me* – This land mine rears its ugly head anytime a manager's decisions and actions are not ruled by the needs of the business, but instead are ruled by that manager's intense focus on either personal recognition or his or her personal agenda.
2. *Managing to the Exception* – This land mine gets triggered any time a person, or group of people allow an idea to be shot down because it's not perfect or anytime a manager lets a matter of small consequences dictate decisions on matters of large consequences.
3. *The Super Doer* – Simply put, the Super Doer land mine goes off any time you spot a situation or issue that should be handled by a staff member but instead you jump in and resolve the issue yourself.
4. *The Blame Addiction* – This land mine goes off any time managers spot a problem and then instead of getting the problem *fixed*, they spend valuable time and energy trying to find out who is to blame for the issue.

5. *The Popularity Priority* – Whenever you make a decision based on what will make you more popular rather than what is best for the business, the Popularity Priority land mine goes off.
6. *Cloudy Expectations* – The Cloudy Expectations land mine goes off any time a manager sets a project off in a particular direction without setting clear expectations of the people participating or of the project itself.
7. *Confrontation Phobia* – This land mine goes off whenever a manager chooses not to confront an issue because it's just plain easier to take the path of least resistance and let it go.
8. *Managing by Committee* – This land mine detonates anytime progress on a project slows down, or a critical decision gets delayed or never gets made at all because someone, somewhere down the line decides that he or she does not want to shoulder the responsibility of being entirely accountable.

Marty says we should keep these leadership land mines in front of us. They are the specific behaviors that cripple our ability to lead effectively. Just being mindful of them will make it easier for us to avoid them. Each decision we make is an opportunity either to jump on and suffer the damage of a leadership land mine, or a chance to avoid the leadership land mines, and in so doing enhance our professional body of work and emerge as a true leader.

Enjoy this month's selection, *Leadership Land Mines – 8 Management Catastrophes and How to Avoid Them*, and share it with others in your life because as Alvin Toffler says; *“The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”*