

Media Management 3rd ed: A Casebook Approach. 2004. By Jan LeBlanc Wicks, George Sylvie, C. Ann Hollifield, Stephen Lacy, Ardyth Broadrick Sohn, with Angela Powers. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

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All the primary authors from the 1999 edition of this book return to update their sections of this revision. Changes in the Internet were the major updates they discovered as they reviewed the literature in their respect fields. Readers familiar with the earlier work will also note that addition attention has been given to case studies. New extended ones have been included in this edition.

Stephen Lacy begins the discussion in the first chapter in a logical way by talking about managerial decision making. He presents a model showing the relationship between uncertainty and risk, noting, “The greater the risk, the more important the decision is for a company.” The “decision wheel” is another graphic included in the chapter that assists readers in seeing what is being discussed. Lacy reminds readers that management must have accurate information if it is to make appropriate decisions. He writes, “Just as decision making is the heart of management, the collection and appropriate analysis of information are the hubs of decision making.”

The element of time receives a good amount of focus in Lacy’s comments. He stresses the importance timing has to effective management. Being action oriented is linked with the time sensitive nature of decision making. We’re told that all goals should have a time frame for their completion. That’s a theme found in most goal-setting books that is important to remember.

On the issue of managing people and building on their strengths, Lacy recommends placing people in positions where their abilities are best matched with organizational needs. As for weaknesses, he advises to train them to help overcome those weak spots. He goes on to discuss chemistry between people in a working unit such as a newsroom. This is a solid chapter which sets a nice tone for the book.

Chapter 2 makes some valid points on changes in leadership and the workforce. Its weakness is a tendency toward political correctness in places. The chapter starts with an enlightening discussion on what makes a leader. In essence it's because such people have ideas worth following, substance.

How many people, especially those of us in academe, can agree with the author's comment on ineffective meetings where she writes, "Unfortunately, many meetings are simply a drain rather than a productive event." I underlined that sentence! Biographies I've read by achievers indicates a lot of doers have had similar perceptions. Sohn points out the weakness of these dysfunctional gatherings is relevance. That's the missing part. Too bad more people don't read that section of this book.

Chapter three covers some familiar territory on the topic of motivation. The theories you'd find in basically any management book are included. That's not a criticism, as I think it's appropriate material. My criticism is a cheap shot the author takes near the chapter's end when he writes, "Women and people of color bring experiences that White male media managers do not understand and perhaps fear." Excuse me! Only White males have this problem? How naïve. I don't mean to be excessively critical of the chapter's author since he cited me, which I truly appreciate. I just think it's appropriate to

point out that pointing all the blame at White males is oversimplifying and not based in reality.

Angela Powers' chapter on media becoming more international adds a nice mix to the discussion. Gannett and MSNBC are discussed and organizational charts make for a clearer understanding of the information. A positive word on bringing in consultants is included when she tells us, "Consultants are sometimes needed to change the overall management environment if a company wants to foster more participation within the entire organization."

In chapter 5 George Sylvie does a commendable job of updating the technology section of the new edition by discussing changes the Internet have brought about in both media organizations and audience expectations. He tells us, "Technologically driven change is becoming the norm so media managers must overcome organizational culture and routinized work patterns and biases to adequately deal with that change." He makes a good point on employee perception of equipment by noting that if an editor is constantly complaining about a piece of equipment, the entire staff's trust in that technology will be undermined. Sylvie has a couple of models that view a media organization from a system's perspective, which I find particularly helpful.

There are both strengths and weaknesses in the chapter on regulation and self-regulation. First, the strengths are that in the beginning we're told that the media landscape is changing rapidly and managers need to keep this in mind. From this flows a discussion of legal matters such as antitrust issues, libel matters, privacy concerns, and topics of that nature.

Moving on now to one of the weaknesses in the chapter. She discusses the matter of perception people from different backgrounds have about fairness in a newsroom. The discussion is incomplete because it only considers the perspective of one group. Other groups who also may perceive a lack of fairness have no one to tell their story.

LeBlanc Wicks gives readers a tip on where to access follow-up material. She gives the URL for three legal sources on the Internet. Students interested in pursuing any of the topics can do so by exploring these web pages.

Overall this book adds to our understanding of the topic. It is updated in a relevant manner. The material is presented in an organized way. Generally speaking it is a good addition to the literature.