

# Book Review

## *The Power Principle: Influence with Honor,*

by Blaine Lee, Ph.D.; (Simon & Schuster,1997) 352 pp., ISBN 0-6848- 1058-1; \$25.00 (hardcover); ISSN 0- 6848-46160; \$14.00 (paperback).

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*Taking the Time to Ask Yourself the Big Questions in: Your Work and Play* “Interdependence asks, ‘What can we do and be together?’ Interdependence asks the synergy question.” -- Blaine Lee

We live in turbulent times. The societal and familial frameworks that formerly shaped individual behavior are tenuous and fragmented. Our professional and personal relationships are sometimes transient and self-limiting. World events are rocking our sense of personal security. In the midst of abrupt change and continuous movement, how does an individual retain his or her sense of personal values and right action? How does this same individual encourage others to make higher order decisions that benefit others?

In *The Power Principle: Influence with Honor*, Blaine Lee investigates the ideas of power and influence. He develops his ideas by starting with the premise that each individual has a fundamental choice to make; to relinquish personal power and live life as a victim or to embrace personal power and live as an agent of positive change. The most important aspects of this book are Lee's descriptions of different types of power, their uses, and their limitations. The three types of power he examines are coercive power, utilitarian power, and principled power. Coercive power is power based on fear; it is the power of tyrants. *Firings will continue until morale improves.* It fosters dependent, servile behaviors. Utilitarian power is power based on trade; it is the power of mercenaries. *You scratch my back; I'll scratch yours.* It fosters self-interested, independent action. Principled power is power based on the greater good; it is the power of true leaders. *Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.* It fosters integrity-based, interdependent action.

Through the use of anecdotes, allegories, and personal experiences, Lee shows that only through the use of principled power can individuals and groups reach higher order achievements. Throughout the book, the ideas presented are reinforced through end of the chapter exercises and questions that help us examine our values and how our values

shape the choices we make. Knowing that most people have multiple roles to play in life, he examines our use of power and influence in a variety of contexts: as bosses, workers, teachers, parents, and friends. For example, in the chapter titled *How to Honor*, Lee examines ten qualities that honorable people incorporate into their relationships: persuasion, patience, gentleness, teachability acceptance, kindness, knowledge, discipline, consistency, and integrity. After a short description of each quality, a self-check comprised of two exercises is presented.

The first exercise is a series of questions to ask yourself to help you determine whether you are exemplifying this quality in your relationships. The second exercise is a series of questions to ask another to demonstrate this quality in a relationship.

To illustrate, under the quality “gentleness,” some of the questions to ask yourself (first series) are: “How would I respond if I were treated this way? Am I being offensive? Is this the right time?” Examples of the questions to ask another (second series) include: “Are you hopeful this might work? Do you believe that you could do what I am asking you to do? Is there anything else you would like me to know?” For those that think gentleness is not a necessary business and personal skill, Dr. Lee has this to say, *The capacity for gentleness is a reliable indicator of strength*. Recognizing that we do not always find ourselves in environments that foster honorable action, Lee has included a chapter called “What If *They* Are Trying To Influence You?” In this chapter practical suggestions for dealing with people and environments that are attempting to coerce you into accepting situations or actions that are against your values and your best interests are presented. The situations he touches on in this chapter range from living in an abusive home situation to finding yourself in a downsized position at work.

Lee describes the four strategies available to you under these conditions: get on (with your life as soon as possible), get by (hang in), get help (join with others for support or resistance), or get out (leave the situation). Even more succinctly, he presents the military acronym, SERE: survive, evade, resist, or escape. One of the most important points of this chapter is that, no matter what your situation, you always have the ability to increase your internal security by focusing on what you can do (make proactive choices) and what you are (your character). In line with this theme, he advises that each of us should plan for change so we are not caught off guard by it, thus finding ourselves in a vulnerable position.

In *The Power Principle*, the ideas of service, of commitment to others, and of hope are presented in a thoughtful and upbeat way. Lee effectively argues that interdependent, integrity-based action that draws on the strengths of the individuals in the group makes the whole stronger than any of its individual parts. Lee asks many simple but profound questions of his readers: “At the end of your life, looking back, will you have lived in a

way that is worthy of the best in you?” In a time when many of us are reflecting on the future and the choices we may be forced to make, this book takes on added significance.

As Lee states in *The Power Principle*, the real question is not “What are you willing to die for?” but rather “What are you willing to live for?”