

Block, Peter. *Stewardship*. San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1996.

Peter Block writes about structural change to human relationships and communities, the workplace, and society at large. Some of his works are: *Flawless Consulting*, *The Empowered Manager*, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. Mr. Block's office is in Mystic, Connecticut.

Preface. We seek organizations that accomplish their purposes. Block uses the term "stewardship" as an umbrella for series of ideas: service over self-interest, balance of power, commitment to the community at large, participation by all, and redistribution of wealth and privileges. Where these elements are lacking, real service is missing.

I. Trading your Kingdom for a Horse.

Chapter 1: *Replacing Leadership with Stewardship*. The idea of leadership carries with it the baggage of paternalism or parentalism. Block recommends a different organization of our working together: stewardship. Stewardship emphasizes empowerment over dependency, service over self-interest, purpose over money, and other values. Leadership lacks the power to make fundamental change. Leadership creates bureaucracy, which values managed, reproducible goals given from a ruling class. The idea of leadership current in the culture is incompatible with stewardship.

Chapter 2: *Choosing Partnership over Patriarchy*. Patriarchy is a belief system that credits control, consistency, and predictability. Hierarchical structure, common policies and practices throughout an organization, and measurable indices of success or failure: these drive patriarchy. Patriarchy creates bureaucracy to execute its purposes, which breeds self-interest and internal politics. Partnership acknowledges our inherent interdependence. Partners: 1) struggle together to define purpose, 2) have a right to say no, 3) share accountability, and 4) must be absolutely honest with one another.

Chapter 3: *Choosing Adventure Over Safety*. Entitlement proclaims that we should receive plenty without risk. Empowerment leaves creating the organization to those who comprise it. They define purpose, and invest emotionally. Each of us colludes with the patriarchies in which we participate when we do not face our own desire for safety.

Chapter 4: *Choosing Service Over Self-Interest*. Power is not a class-right, but a grant from those who are led. Stewardship has confidence in the native knowledge of every person. Stewardship distributes power, wealth, purpose, and privilege differently than patriarchy. To overcome patriarchy, the managers must do work as well as manage. Privileges must be available to all. Service is spiritual; we all long to find meaning in offering our actions to some greater good than ourselves. We are stuck in a class system in our businesses that is not working. The problem cannot be solved by more of the same.

II. The Redistribution of Power, Purpose, and Wealth.

Chapter 5: *Defining the Stewardship Contract*. Stewardship requires: 1) the people doing the work control the work. Management is a task for workers, not a class of people. 2) Measurements should be designed by the core workers, and used for evaluating, not coercion. 3) Organizational consistency must yield to local solutions. 4) Each team will know all there is to know, especially the difficult or bad news. 5) Rewards flow from the organization and teams' successes. Individualism breeds self-interest; community breeds service. A stewardship contract: a) defines the core mission, b) accounts without controlling, c) sets constraints on the team consistent with the organization's structure, d) defines governance as partnership among equals, e) commits

to disclosing information and chooses where to begin, and f) requires commitment of teams and restraint from superiors.

Chapter 6: *Upsetting Expectations: The Emotional Work of Stewardship.* We must accept that good things can happen without us controlling them. The hardest part of stewardship is interior change. We each desire domination and dependency, to rule and/or be taken care of. No one other than us can adequately address our emotional needs and desires. We tamp down need for domination by saying no to requests that we control. We tamp down dependency by refusing caretaking relationships.

Chapter 7: *Redesigning Management Practices and Structures.* 1) Truth. Change begins with full disclosure. Straight-forward discussion of poor performance, the need to make cuts, and business literacy are required. 2) Management. Change the architecture of control to those that support stewardship. Move past hierarchy. Find a new role for the boss and flatten control of the enterprise.

Chapter 8: *Rethinking the Role of Staff Functions.* Staffs are intermediate bureaucrats, traditionally serving the needs of executive management for consistency, predictability, and control. Stewardship staffs service the core work teams, teaching their expertise to the work teams. Core work teams should be free to use the staff team assistance, if it is helpful, or seek other help, if it is not. Staffs should give a service guarantee: if we do not provide what is promised, we will fix it and charge you nothing.

Chapter 9: *Financial Practices: Creating Accountability with Self-Control.* Money is a common language to measure success, and our financial control structures symbolize our beliefs. All work teams should have full knowledge and economic literacy. The teams are responsible for their budgets: monitoring, spending, auditing. Some structures are determined by statute, and cannot be changed within the organization.

Chapter 10: *Human Resources: Ending the Practice of Paternalism.* Human resources departments are the golden handcuffs of bureaucracy. You are owned, but gently. HR staff must abandon the class system and performance reviews and hiring control and the career promise. HR staff should train the core work teams in things they want and need to learn.

Chapter 11: *Compensation and Performance Evaluation: Overturning the Class System.* Pay structures reinforce the management class system. In fact, performance is not for sale. People do not perform because well-paid. They perform because their work is meaningful (and they make enough money to meet their needs). A business cannot purchase devotion. Bureaucracies destroy community, so they can pit one individual against another through pay structures and the evaluations that award the pay bumps. Work teams should be paid for real service outcomes. The pay structure used for top management should be the pay structure for all workers, including stock options. In exchange for great potential for earning, workers receive no guarantees. When rancor grows over money, despair follows on its heels.

III. The Triumph of Hope over Experience.

Chapter 12: *Cosmetic Reform: When the Disease Becomes the Cure.* Change may fail by recurring to the same beliefs that created the problem in the first place. Vision comes from below, from the work teams themselves. Vision from above is patriarchy. Change from the top frequently creates a new department of stewardship, or starts an organization-wide training program, or coerces through rewards, or implements new strategies across the board. This is just more patriarchy and parenting.

Chapter 13: *Recreating Our Organization Through Stewardship.* To reorganize ourselves for service, we must communicate the stewardship contract, individually buy-in to the vision, start where there is an opening, make customers the measure of actions preferred, measure by conversation (not evaluations), eschew new departments, and carefully choose instruction. To summarize: 1) define stewardship contract, 2) renegotiate control and responsibility, 3) fully inform work teams, 4) consult with customers and people in the organization to create a future to work toward, 5) train core work team members in management skills, 6) form improvement conversations, 7) redesign management practices to start with customer needs and supporting the teams that meet those needs, 8) structure the organization to the other changes, and 9) reallocate compensation and privilege.

Chapter 14: *Cynics, Victims, and Bystanders.* A cynic's power derives from the truth of his derogations and the fact that his hearers share his pessimism. Do not disagree with the cynic, but ask him to believe. Reframe cynicism (or bystanding or victimhood) as a choice. Contradict their belief that disbelief is the patent and only possible posture with respect to their experience. Related to the cynic are the bystander and victim. The bystander refuses to commit until all questions are answered and uncertainties quelled. Such caution is a choice. Do not persuade or barter; ask for belief. Give cynics, bystanders, and victims time to process your request. Eventually they will get on board or seek other opportunities.

Chapter 15: *Choosing Freedom, Service, and Adventure.* When confronted with the possibility of structural change to institutional systems, most people ask "How?" The answer is "yes." "How?" is a defense to answering the difficult questions about living your freedom, valuing service, and risking safety and security. We value democracy, but those values evaporate when we go to work. There, the divine right of kings prevails. We must change ourselves, then choose service, freedom, and adventure.