

“Be Your Own Guru” by Olivia Stefanino

In this book Olivia Stefanino offers us a window into her "Be Your Own Guru" leadership and personal development programme which is explained in more detail at her website of the same name. As we follow the progress of three fictional delegates, who are actually amalgamations of many real people who have been through Olivia's programme, we feel as if we are going through the learning experience with them. Not only do we empathise with Matt, Jenny and Pete as they grapple with the material and attempt to apply it to their lives, but as a reader we also feel that we are part of the same story!

I found Be Your Own Guru extremely easy to read, partly because of Olivia's easy-going and often humorous style of writing, and partly as a consequence of the book's structure which alternates between the story of the three delegates and a follow-up explanatory chapter. This dual structure works really well and makes Olivia's book all the more readable.

In "Be Your Own Guru", Olivia builds upon two crucial insights which we could all benefit from taking on board:

- . That influencing peoples' effectiveness in the workplace is much more a question of emotional intelligence, habits, and personal motivations than it is a question of focusing on skills.
- . That in order for people to effectively lead others they must first learn to lead themselves!

From this starting point Olivia invites us on a journey of self-actualisation through learning how to ditch our emotional baggage, develop effective PERSONAL goals and align them to those of our employer or organisation, and a strong sense of vision and purpose in order for us to become leaders of our own lives. Hence the name Be Your Own Guru!

Like most of us at one time or another in our careers, the three delegates in the book seem to have lost their sense of direction and motivation and this has begun to negatively affect their performance. These are precisely the areas which the Be Your Own Guru programme is designed to address. If you think about it, all organisations in today's tough business environment need to find ways to improve employee engagement, motivation and self-leadership ability, in order to find that illusive yet crucial competitive edge. Olivia's book then speaks not only to individuals looking to improve their personal effectiveness, but is also highly relevant to anyone looking to improve business performance in any size of organisation. Like me you may find this book even more relevant when you learn that the results of a pilot project of Olivia's Be Your Own Guru leadership programme at one the UK's major banks showed an improvement of 330% in delegates sales results.

Be Your Own Guru is also an extremely practical book, offering an array of tested tools with which to bring what you learn to fruition in your own life. It doesn't just explain how each tool works, it takes you through the process step by step so that you can learn how to do them for yourself.

This refreshing, funny and engaging book shows convincingly that investing in people really does bring tangible results to businesses and individuals alike, provided it is directed towards the underlying influences of behaviours and attitudes rather than simply addressing 'surface' problems and concerns such as task-related skills. I would recommend this one to anyone interested in improving themselves and their business. I read it twice and I'm still getting more out of it!

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