

## Caring Leadership

By

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Have you ever heard anything as sickening as “caring leadership”? Only a young, female management researcher oblivious to what really goes on in the world of business would coin such an incompetent and ridiculous phrase. Clearly someone who knows nothing about leadership, but instead spends all their time in a cosy university library. Only this is not the case! We’re talking about a real leader, and one of the most successful ones to boot. Whenever leaders take the time to write about management and relate their own experiences and opinions about managing, they deserve praise. And praise should certainly be given to Jens Moberg, author of the book *Handle with Care*. The term *due diligence* is by now well known in the world of business, and so is its premise: handling a project with care. Moberg, however, takes the idea even further: to him, it is essential to handle *co-workers* and *clients* with care.

Other Danish leaders have written successfully about leadership, among them Alfred Josefsen, owner of the supermarket chain Irma. I would now like to welcome Jens Moberg’s book, which is well worth reading—why, I would almost say that this book should be holiday reading for any busy, crisis-tormented CEO, who has perhaps already brought Ram Charan’s *Leadership in the Era of Economic Uncertainty* with him or her on holiday. But leadership in times of crisis cannot stand alone—just as crisis management with a focus on liquidity, short-term financial management, among other things, cannot stand alone.

This is a profound and personal book. If you are short of time or cannot be bothered reading, at least read the preface. This is powerful stuff, and it is only four pages long. “My best advice for others in search of the management style best suited for them is to also begin looking inward and understanding themselves,” writes Moberg. He does not point the finger derisively or advocate one

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specific type of leadership, and therefore caring leadership is not about a certain type of leadership, but about the principle of caring for clients and co-workers.

There are too many extremes and too little sincerity in leadership. It is being marketed as some sort of tool or instrument—something anybody can acquire and learn to use. Management theory holds too many easy-to-implement, wise-guy solutions, which we are all seduced by. But behind all of this, you find *people*. “The foundation of successful leadership is laid through self-awareness,” says Moberg. “Self-awareness begins with discovering who you are as a person. But self-awareness also develops from learning to understand how you form relationships and interact with other people.” People exercise leadership, and people are the ones who make decisions and show us the true meaning of caring leadership. But is this care primarily intended for short-term shareholder interests, or is it, above all, intended for clients, co-workers, nature and life on Earth? What values constitute caring leadership? This is by no means self-evident. Obviously, people are behind leadership, but if these people do not possess their own values and opinions, if they are not endowed with a sense of purpose and direction, then these very people are but a tool—a tool for other forces and for other people.

This book does not proclaim to have discovered the true path or the truth about leadership. These are to be found within oneself. This does not, however, mean that I am alone in this world, for, as Moberg says, my relationships with other people are important, and so is my inspiration to and from them. You can achieve “far better results through inspiration than through inspection,” he says. So you should read this book if you are a self-aware person who wants to keep evolving as a leader—that is, become more aware of what good leadership means to you. Because that is the purpose of this book—and it serves that purpose perfectly, too.

This book is probably one of the best leadership books ever written by a Danish leader. It is an extraordinary book; it is well written; it is committed and committing; it is personal; it is suitable for every type of leader; it is specific; it offers a multitude of ideas and clear formulations about leadership and about the very nature of leadership. Bring it with you on holiday!

**Jens Moberg: *Handle with Care*. Gyldendal Business. 194 pages. Illustrated by Anders Morgenthaler. Price: 300 DKK. ISBN 9788702077889.**