

*Unleashing Team Potential*: some business lessons from man's favourite companion!

The world of business – and business management – is a world of extraordinary complexity. Rarely are business issues framed and coloured in black and white; more often, they are framed in shades of grey (maybe even 50 Shades of Grey!) if for no reason other than the fact that, in business, there are always tradeoffs, there are always caveats, and there are always so many stakeholders to consider: the shareholders, the majority owners, the employees, and the clients and customers.

And sometimes, in a truly high-profile business, there may also be a broadly based public good to consider. In short, life is not easy in the corner suite! And that, we suppose, is why the folks who inhabit those offices are paid so handsomely.

But often, perhaps more than we might care to admit, complex issues and complex problems aren't necessarily the bogeyman that we make them out to be. Sometimes, the answer to all that complexity can be simplicity itself – it all depends on the approach that we might choose to take.

Sylvia Plester-Silk has pretty much seen it all over the years. She's the principal facilitator and coach at a company called On Purpose Consulting.ca and it has been her mission to guide and lead countless companies through the rough patches that inevitably develop. She's a fixer!

Plester-Silk is also an author and her newly released publication *Unleashing Team Potential: Lessons for Managers from My Canine Friends* is a remarkable work that workplace executives will find enormously valuable as they attempt to navigate the ever-changing, ever-more-complex business landscape. In short, what Plester-Silk has done for the business-management environment is, in many ways, similar to what Ontario author David Chilton did for investors some years in his best-selling book *The Wealthy Barber*.

Where Chilton used simple, folksy storytelling to make his case for investing and money management, Plester-Silk looks to the canine world to make her case for simplicity in business management. She likens a management team to a team of sled dogs, each and every one trained to pull – and pull hard – in the same direction. One bad dog, perhaps having a bad-dog day, can mean the difference between success and failure!

This book is a must-read, not only for its valuable insights and observations, but also for its simplicity. Over the course of its 178 pages, Plester-Silk takes the reader through a variety of business and management scenarios, typically looking to the canine world for direction and problem-solving. On leadership, the author discusses *How to Play With the Big Dogs*; on team success, she writes on *Competition vs. Cooperation*; elsewhere, Plester-Silk discusses workplace bullying in a chapter entitled *Dogs vs. Cats*. And in her summation, a chapter entitled *The Final Bark*, the author uses her own much-loved dog Josee for a discussion about love and caring, frustration, anger and acceptance.

*Unleashing Team Potential* is a very smart book based on a very simple premise. The writing is sharp; the reading is easy; and managers, in businesses large and small, will find it invaluable. Yes, it is that good!

*Unleashing Team Potential: Lessons for Managers from My Canine Friends*  
by Sylvia Plester-Silk  
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