

Business Book Review

By Linden Arden

Unlike his first book, *Secrets of Power Presentations*, Peter Urs Bender's second offering, *Leadership from Within*, suffers from an annoying lack of substance. Indeed, even the book's section headings read like a "Kids in the Hall" skit on business inspiration presentations: "Know Yourself," "Have Vision and Passion," "Take Risks," and worst of all, a section entitled "Communicate."

And nothing else in these sections relieves this impression. This entire book is, however unintentionally, a bit of a joke – or raw material for a whole pile of jokes.

Bender's essential premise is that leadership plus presentation skills equals success, and while he has succeeded in capturing what makes a quality presentation (in the earlier book), he has fallen far short of defining leadership – which, in all fairness, is no easy task. But it is made dramatically more difficult when the person defining leadership resorts to such pedestrian trivialities as, "Having a goal is essential for getting where you want to go," or "Remember: Risk is in the mind of the beholder."

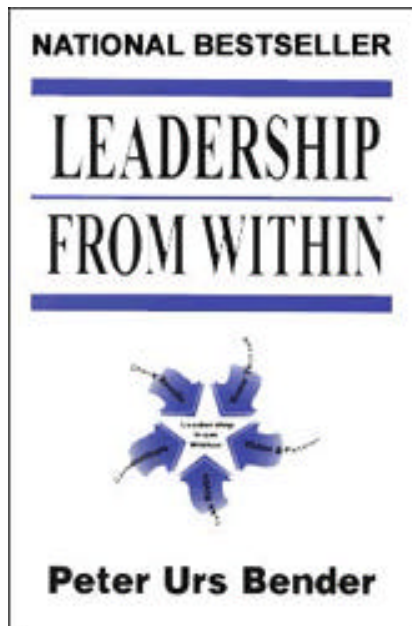
So, thinks the reader of this review, 165 words is all it takes to trash this book – which isn't fair. Urs Bender deserves better. His first book (is this getting repetitive?) is excellent. *Secrets of Power Presentations* is a must for anyone whose livelihood occasionally depends upon standing up in front of a

room filled with naturally jaundiced strangers and winning them over. It has power and punch and focus – all of the things that *Leadership from Within* lacks.

Which is the true mystery here: how could such a talented presenter pull up so lame? If the value of the first book is that it explains the secret of power presentations, then why is Peter Urs Bender so incapable of presenting this, his first post-*Presentations* presentation? I think at this point we begin to deal with the differences between a presenter and a definer. Urs Bender is an excellent presenter. His advice on timing is bang on. He intuitively understands what it takes to get the message across, and is well-versed in all of the unpredictable roadblocks that arise in such situations. Give him any message and, if the first book is any indication, he'll explain how it is best presented.

But – and we all know where I am going here – ask Urs Bender to define the message and we stub our collective toes on his glaring lack of defining ability. If leadership is in fact a series of annoyingly banal clichés, then he may have something here. Unfortunately, leadership is not. The last time I checked, Churchill or Bill Gates or Napoleon didn't bother with phrases like "Leadership – even from within – is often not easy. The challenge is to turn potential hardships into opportunities for progress."

I would suggest that the true challenge is getting past page 20 of this disastrous book. If I were a leader I would unequivocally suggest, with the full legitimacy of my personal vision, that this book be avoided. Get the first book. It's good. This one is not.



Leadership from Within
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