

FOREWORD

When Professor Pablo Cardona suggested that I write the foreword to this book, I accepted without a moment's hesitation. For two reasons. First, because of the authors. And second, because of the subject.

Pablo was first a pupil of mine, then I was his mentor. My relationship with him goes back to 1989. That year, I was his instructor in the first year of the MBA Program at IESE, in the subject then known as «The Human Factor». Years later, in 1998, he having earned his doctorate at UCLA and I being head of department, he suggested that I help him carry out a serious, in-depth investigation into management by competencies. Since then, Professor Cardona has been prolific: theoretical models, the assessment tool we baptized with the name of *Telémaco* (*Telemachus*), on-line coaching modules, and a wide range of courses, including a Focused Program that already is a classic of its kind at IESE. This book is the fruit of many years' experience with hundreds of managers and the various companies that have taken his courses and sought his advice.

Pilar García Lombardía, IESE researcher at IESE and co-author of this book, was a pupil of Professor Juan Antonio Pérez López, under whose supervision she wrote her doctoral thesis. With her great knowledge of Pérez López's ideas, she has assisted the competency project since its earliest stages. She co-authored with me the book «Emprendiendo en Femenino», published in the year 2000, and continues to collaborate with me on various research projects belonging to the International Center of Work and Family at IESE.

My pleasure in writing the foreword to this book is due also to the subject matter. Management competencies are, after all, the modern way of talking about the critical managerial habits or virtues that our great teacher, Juan Antonio Pérez López, spent many years investigating at IESE. In the first chapter of his posthumous book, which I was fortunate enough to co-edit, Juan Antonio talks of the company as a «school» of moral virtues. Specifically, he writes: «I hope (and there are encouraging signs) that a new awareness is about to dawn that companies should be schools for the development of people's moral virtues, and that it will spread and be pursued with the efficiency characteristic of companies when they recognize a goal that they consider important»¹. The spread of management by competencies among companies in recent years clearly confirms his intuition, ahead of his time, as he was, and yet so realistic.

And it is true that by managing competencies professionally, a company can become a *school of habits*. That has enormous implications for companies and for society at large. Work is obviously an absolutely essential part of modern life. Accordingly, we must learn to work in such a way that companies build society, not only in the economic sphere but across the entire breadth of human experience: personal relations, harmony between work and personal and family life, respect for nature, etc.

In the 21st century, it is no longer good enough just to measure «what» companies do (economic profit), but also «how» they do it. A company that is incapable of making a profit while, at the same time, developing its people's competencies is bound to fail. More and more companies are starting to realize that and so are taking competencies seriously. Managing competencies is not easy, though. Recent years have seen numerous unsuccessful attempts. One of the fundamental problems in these efforts to implement competency management in companies is the failure to fully grasp the fact that competencies are «habits». And habits are difficult to change.

This book is an exceptionally valuable tool for understanding what management competencies are and how they can be developed. Striking a delicate balance, Cardona and García write in a readable but uncompromising style that reveals the keys to understanding the complexity of the issues at stake, while also offering practical solutions to deal with that complexity. For that reason, I am confident that this book will make a big impression on managers and organizations that wish to use it as a *vade mecum*.

1. PÉREZ LÓPEZ, J.A., *Liderazgo y ética en la dirección de empresas*, Deusto, 1998, p. 31.

Specifically, the book provides the reader with all the ingredients for developing leadership in a company. The first part will enrich his knowledge of management competencies, the different types of competencies, and why companies need competency-based leadership. The second part will help him to diagnose his own strengths and areas for improvement. The third part is a perfect guide to help the leader improve as a person and as a coach. Lastly, the Annexe and Appendices contain complementary information and tools to ensure that the whole process is professionally managed and governed from the start. With these high quality ingredients and a reader who is willing to improve, success in acquiring personal, professional and business leadership is guaranteed.

I would like to end with a word of personal advice to the reader. This book brings the reader face to face with himself: it is a mirror that calls out to be used. It is not a book *for everyone else*. It is for you. Use it. Benefit from it. Set yourself high and inspiring targets for improvement. Commit yourself to a path of continuous improvement, not of processes but of your own life. It is worth it.

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