



Hard Times: Leadership in America

Barbara Kellerman

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Leadership has never played a more prominent role in America's national discourse, and yet our opinions of leaders are at all-time lows. Private sector leaders are widely seen as greedy to the point of being corrupt. Public sector leaders are viewed as incompetent to the point of being inept. And, levels of trust in government have plummeted. As the title of this book conveys, leaders in America are experiencing hard times.

Barbara Kellerman argues that we focus on leaders, and even on followers, while ignoring an essential element of leadership: context. This book is a corrective. It enables leaders to track the terrain that they must navigate in order to create change. Rather than a handy-dandy manual on what to do and how to do it, *Hard Times* is structured as a checklist. Twenty-four brief sections cover key aspects of the American landscape. They trace evolutions and revolutions that have revised our norms, transformed our populations and institutions, and shifted our culture.

Kellerman's crash course on context reveals how significant it is to leadership. Clearer still is the fact that leadership is more difficult than it has ever been. It is context that explains why leadership is so fraught with frustration. And, it is context that makes evident why leadership will be better exercised if it is better understood. Calling out patterns that emerge from the checklist, Kellerman challenges leaders to do better. This fascinating read will change the way that all of us think about leadership, while compelling us to consider what it means for our future.

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