**First break all the rules**

**Book review by Book review by Shola Sonola (CMgr, MCMI, Assoc CIPD)**

**First, Break All the Rules: What the World’s Greatest Managers Do Differently by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman.**

Of the countless books written on Organisational performance this book stands out. Based on the Gallup studies of 80,000 managers and employee responses to the 12 questions which measure the strength of the workplace, it uses empirical data to demonstrate a link between employee opinion and business performance.

The book is a frank and compelling argument for the role of excellent managers in successful organisations. From the onset, the writers debunk the casual myths that have permeated business over the past few decades such as “only a few people are talented” and setting out rules that allow the categories of talent (striving, thinking, relating) to flourish. Against the backdrop of a formulaic or conventional wisdom, Buckingham & Cohen argue for individualism wherein the manager acts as a catalyst facilitating the development of talented employees and turning these talents into brilliant performance.

The book covers 4 Keys (core activities) that great managers excel at: selecting for talent, defining the right outcomes, focusing on strengths, and finding the right fit. Concepts such as mental filters, which describe the various drivers that shape employee behaviour, strikes back against conventional wisdom such as “treat everyone the same”. The authors argue that the best managers break the Golden Rule every day and do treat people differently and play favourites, if that’s what it takes to bring out such talents.

The book was originally released in 1999. In the midst of organisational crisis in the decades since, its basic premise holds an enduring appeal – don’t over promote people, never pass the buck, don’t overpromise. These may sound like common-sense, but the authors resoundingly prove that excellent managers are critical in aiding engaged employees to deliver on the 4 outcomes of productivity, profitability, employee retention and customer satisfaction. Some may argue that it all seems too simplistic.

From experience, I would argue that in an age full of diktats and sound-bites, this peeled back nonsensical approach is exactly what is needed; and the relationship between the employee and manager invariably creates a great place to work.I highly recommend this book. The image of the manager as a plodding, unsophisticated, uncharismatic individual is torn apart in this book – managers form a noble profession and are not leaders-in-waiting. It’s at its heart a very positive book which extols excellent managers for what they are: disciplined individuals with a great insight into the people they manage.

**Shola Sonola**

**Profile - Guest Reviewer - Shola Sonola (Assoc CIPD, MCMI, CMgr)**

Shola is an experienced HR Professional and manager who has built her career within established names such as Pret-A-Manger, Greggs’, the Crown Prosecution Service, The Inland Revenue and Royal Mail. In her current role with Genesis Housing Association, she works as an HR Generalist advising a multi-discipline regional workforce, dealing with complex employee relations cases that challenge managers and Heads of Services in particular with regards to issues such as endemic or persistent sick absences and strained disciplinary concerns. With over 20 years management and HR experience, her ability to invoke cross departmental and collaborative working between managers has helped to bring about resolution of cases which would otherwise have escalated to grievances. She particularly enjoys using her management knowledge to encourage managers to take ownership of all their people management issues and work with their teams to improve the employment relationship, whilst mitigating risks to the business from failure to apply employment legislation or proper procedures. A natural love of psychology and sociology means she is well versed in the socio-cultural influences within the workplace, and how the psychological contract affects the innate behaviours and organisational cultures within the modern workplace especially following a re-organisation or restructure programme.

She enjoys working with the HR team on a range of projects especially using her experience in training and delivery to work with the Learning and Development and the Organisational Development consultants on a range of workshops facilitating the corporate strategy stream on Building Management Capability. Her knowledge of the business means she is able to galvanise managers to focus on employee issues such as performance development and individual learning as part of the wider engagement and great place to work programme.

Shola holds a First Class Combined Honours degree in International Social Policy and Human Resource Management, with professional membership (Assoc CIPD) of the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development (CIPD) and was awarded the Chartered Manager (CMgr) status by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) in 2016.

Interests: Shola’s hobbies include crafting stories to the delight of her two young sons and her family; attempts at match making her friends and cooking Thai/ English/Nigerian fusion foods. She is also passionate about Sense, the society in support of deafblind children and adults.