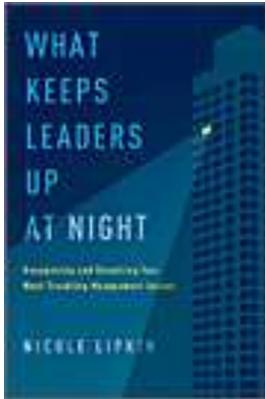


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## PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***What Keeps Leaders up at Night: Recognizing and Resolving Your Most Troubling Management Issues***

Author: **Nicole Lipkin**

Publisher: **AMACOM**

List Price: US\$21.95      Format: hard cover; 237 pages

Publication Date: 2013      ISBN: 9780814432112

Reviewer: ***Stephen Rojak, PMP***

Review Date: Sept 2013

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### Introduction to the Book

How do we get better at being leaders? How do we keep from making the same mistakes over and over? How do we guard against common problems that cause groups to lose cohesion, members to lose engagement and leaders to lose their way? Nicole Lipkin, a psychology consultant and coach, takes on the issues that leaders frequently encounter despite our best intentions.

### Overview of Book's Structure

Each chapter addresses a problem that leaders encounter, such as “Why don’t people heed my sage advice?” or “Why do good teams go bad?” Within each chapter, Dr. Lipkin breaks down the problem diagnostically in search of potential root causes.

For example, the first chapter tackles the question, “I’m a good boss. So why do I sometimes act like a bad one?” The author advances three potential common themes that she has found to occur within such situations: The leader is either too busy to win, too proud to see or too afraid to lose. In the section discussing being too proud to see, she explains confirmation bias, illustrates how it can undermine a well-meaning leader and offers techniques to defend against it.

### Highlights: What’s New in this Book?

Dr. Lipkin takes the position that even the best leader will have leadership situations that go wrong. She offers an introspective approach to diagnose situations, identify common themes and develop habits to counter them.

One chapter discusses the question, “Why do people resist change?” The subject of resistance to change is too comprehensive to fully cover in one chapter of a book. Yet I found the author made a very thoughtful contribution to the subject by suggesting that leaders examine how they and their groups frame their responses to challenges in the light of status quo bias. The more emotionally charged your description of the situation is, the more it indicates the presence of status quo bias. The author’s recommendation is to step back and frame the situation in less value-laden terms and examine how such framing might lead you to a different response.

### **Highlights: What I liked!**

The overall approach was very systematic and well thought-out. From the large question that heads each paragraph, the reader can work down to specific issues that can be meaningfully addressed, such as biases to counteract or behaviors to implement.

Many of the chapter discussions refer to existing research. These are supplemented at the end of the book with a list of relevant reference sources by chapter. The reader who wants to learn more about cognitive dissonance, for example, can follow the references to obtain further information.

### **Shortfalls: What was Missing!**

Interestingly, one recommendation that the author gives without a pointer to supporting research is to use a technique called active listening. If Alice is actively listening to Bob, after Bob is finished speaking, Alice will paraphrase what she just heard Bob say, using her own words.

Counselors often recommend active listening. However, the people who I have discussed the technique with have said they hated being on the receiving end of it. For this reason, I would be reluctant to employ active listening, not wanting to alienate colleagues through its use.

I would like to see a recommendation for using active listening backed by some research that establishes situations where it might be more likely to be better received and to help me identify situations where use of it might rub people the wrong way.

### **Who might benefit from the Book?**

Anyone who cares about her/his ability to lead effectively and who wants to avoid making the same mistakes over and over can benefit from this book. It is a good resource for leaders who want to examine their own behavior and be more effective.

## Conclusion

If you accept the idea that leaders are not born, but made — and often unmade, then it follows that a leader must be introspective and watchful of her own behavior without becoming nervous and tentative. This book provides helpful diagnostic resources for the leader who wants to self-examine and improve.

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*What Keeps Leaders Up at Night: Recognizing and Resolving Your Most Troubling Management Issues; by Nicole Lipkin; published by AMACOM, June 2013; hard cover, 288 pages; ISBN: 9780814432112; List price: \$21.95; See more at: <http://www.amacombooks.org/book.cfm?isbn=9780814432112>*

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## About the Reviewer



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**Stephen Rojak** is an experienced software developer and manager, with experience in the manufacturing, retail, marketing services, digital media and computer software industries. He is also an economist and historian. Email: [srojak@srojak.com](mailto:srojak@srojak.com)