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# Unconventional Leadership: How Henry Ford Taught Me About Reinvention And Diversity



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## UNCONVENTIONAL LEADERSHIP

WHAT HENRY FORD and DETROIT  
TAUGHT ME ABOUT  
REINVENTION and DIVERSITY

"...[a]n irresistibly readable and intellectually useful book."  
—WILLIAM C. TAYLOR,  
bestselling author of *Practically Radical*



## Synopsis

What does it take to lead the successful turnaround of four consecutive organizations? What does it take to run a \$4 billion business in Detroit as the city struggles to emerge from municipal bankruptcy and its worst ongoing crisis ever? What does it take to be a female CEO who has come up against discrimination and personal attack? It takes Unconventional Leadership, a style of leadership based on confronting reality and leading headlong through adversity. In this inspiring story, Nancy Schlichting, the CEO of Henry Ford Health System, reveals her unique strategies that drive success: maintaining a focus on people, creating a culture of innovation and reinvention, and embracing diversity as a key strategy for growth. The book describes a leadership paradigm that will motivate, inspire, and drive new thinking in today's disruptive business environment where traditional modes of managing are no longer working. In Unconventional Leadership, Schlichting weaves together three themes that explain how she has become one of the most powerful individuals in healthcare today: (1) deftly conquering the immense challenges within the healthcare industry itself—consolidation, new models of delivery and financing, increasing government regulation and oversight, changing customer expectations, and pressures on cost and quality (2) the exciting and panoramic backdrop of Henry Ford and Detroit's legacy of invention and innovation combined with ongoing attempts to restore and renew a city in deep decline; and (3) forging a career path and excelling as a female CEO in a world typically dominated by men. An abiding fan of the underdog, Schlichting reveals, above all else, the sheer grit and determination required to lead through adversity and create a successful legacy of leadership.

## Book Information

File Size: 1414 KB

Print Length: 256 pages

Publisher: Bibliomotion, Inc. (October 27, 2015)

Publication Date: October 27, 2015

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01621CRZ6

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #400,993 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #39

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Business & Money > Economics > Urban & Regional #121

in Books > Business & Money > Economics > Urban & Regional #193 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Business & Money > Women & Business

## **Customer Reviews**

Let's start with full disclosure, I read the book because I have the privilege of knowing Nancy and seeing her leadership in a variety of situations. Frankly, I was curious to understand more about her experiences in Detroit and what happened with the aborted Beaumont merger. Over the years, I have found that reading the stories of renowned leaders can be instructive sometimes providing good examples to follow and sometimes providing example never to be followed. I suspected that Nancy would provide the former and I was not disappointed. I have now referred the book to others not because I know Nancy but because of the great lessons the book holds for aspiring and veteran leaders alike. Her story is personal, authentic and inspiring. I particularly like the chapter around finding the disruptors and the building of West Bloomfield. Too often the search for experience results in more of the same in business. Her story and use of the Ford quote "It is not easy to get away from tradition. That is why all our new operations are always directed by men who have had no previous experience of the subject and therefore have not had a chance to get on really familiar terms with the impossible" is timely as we look to add more diversity to leadership the world over (though a modern interpretation of the quote would jettison the gender bias). Thank you, Nancy, for taking the time and being brave enough to share your true story.

I am always interested in new voices on issues of leadership. As a long time student of leadership herself, Schlichting intertwines her life experiences as a female chief executive (currently as CEO of Henry Ford Health System) with lessons from inventor and innovator Ford himself. Given the years she has spent working in Detroit during turbulent times, the juxtaposition is an intriguing one. Under Schlichting, HFHS won the coveted Baldridge Quality Award for performance excellence, with its national recognition for innovation, improvement, and visionary leadership. The seven-year journey her team undertook, from top executives to janitorial staff, is a model of patience, perseverance, and the use of continuous feedback that led HFHS to growth in efficiency, workforce satisfaction, and customer service.

People always tell me how awful Detroit is. As far as I am concerned though, the Motor City has always been a place of great memories since my childhood. From the Detroit Lions, Meeting Mr. Barry Sanders, Mr. Herman Moore, The Jacksons (remember 1983?) Mosque#1, the auto show, Ford Field, Berverly Hills Cop I, all those places to eat, Mowtown holds a special place for me. No matter where you go there are reminders of the Ford Motor Industry in the form of old buildings, factories, and other structures. While the focus of this work is to discuss leadership reform in America, I found the contents to bring back many wonderful memories of my trips to the Motor City. I believe this work should be a point of reference for all those attempting to rebuild aspects of inner-city life in America. An equally important aspect of "Unconventional Leadership," is the emphasis on diversity in the workforce, which needs to be cited. in light of the year 2016. There are many incredible insights given by the author which are of value. Looking forward to the day the Motor City becomes new again and when that happens Ms. Schlichting will be there. "We do not make changes for the sake of making them, but we never fail to make a change once it is demonstrated that the new way is better than the old way. we hold it as our duty to premit nothing to stand in the way of progress. ""Our invariable reply to "It can't be done" is "Go do it. ""One's own workers ought to be one's own best customers. ""In conclusion, I will state that it is my intention to go forward with plans for complete and credible hospital for the benefit of Detroit."

I had heard good things, and read the reviews, but was sorely disappointed when I got the book and started to read. It's all "I", "me", "myself", and every other conceivable word that can give praise to one's self. Also inserted was her view on being treated differently because she was a lesbian, and how she overcame, and how others who are gay and lesbian can too. This is good, and I don't mind it, but that isn't overtly advertised as being a major part of the book. In the end, nothing new here, just how wonderful Ms. Schlichting is, and how fortunate all the companies are to have her in charge.

Unconventional Leadership: What Henry Ford and Detroit Taught Me About Reinvention and Diversity is a must read for leaders and aspiring leaders at any level. It is not simply for business people but for anyone who is looking for a transformation on a personal and professional level. In the book you will learn what unconventional leadership is and the mode of operating that led Nancy Schlichting to work with her team to turn around HFHS and a number of other organizations, the process and 7 year journey of HFHS winning the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, involvement in the ongoing restoration of the Detroit community, and Nancy's appreciation of the

strengths of diversity weaved into her personal story of risk taking, compassion, bravery, and practicality. The book pays homage to Henry Ford's legacy as a brave and exceptional example of unconventional leadership. Many valuable leadership themes resonate throughout the book: A career path of gravitating toward big, complex, and challenging problems, listening to disrupters in the organization, communicating to make a large company feel small, the strength of diversity, and partnering with supporters and the community. A great take away from reading this book is the authenticity of the personal as well as professional journey detailed and how the book teaches the core values of one of our nation's great healthcare leaders.

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