



weLEAD Book Review

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Fired Up or Burned Out

How to Reignite your Team's Passion, Creativity, and Productivity

Thomas Nelson - 2007 (230 pages hardback)

Author Michael Lee Stallard

with Carolyn Dewing-Hommes and Jason Pankau

ISBN 0-7852-2358-4

First, allow me to explain why this book is exceptional and why it connected so deeply with your humble reviewer. Far too many organizations today have most of their employees completely demotivated and burnt out. Walking around the halls or looking into their offices reveal zombie like people who resemble cast members from the 1968 classic movie, *Night of the Living Dead*. Sadly, executives and managers have grown so accustomed to this (or feel this way themselves) they have come to accept it as normal! Even energetic new employees soon lose their passion and enthusiasm and join the rest of the cast.

Fired up or Burned Out is a heartfelt plea by author Michael Lee Stallard that people and organizations don't need to exist this way. In this well written book he reminds us that *leadership* can make a tremendous difference in the culture and zeal of any team or organization. A few powerful experiences were the genesis of this work and helped Stallard to see the transforming power of "connection" in any environment. One experience was a serious health situation with his wife and another was the tragedy of 9/11. As the author states, "I became convinced that it came down to this: connection. Our connection with others in our organization keeps us fired up for long periods of time. Connection means basic human psychological needs for respect, recognition, belonging, autonomy, personal growth, and meaning."

Fired up or Burned Out is logically written in four parts. In part 1, Stallard strongly makes the case for creating emotional connections. He explains in depth why this connection is so essential and life changing. He introduces some elements that modify a culture by making or increasing a *connection* among people. He then examines real world examples of well-known executives who made a powerful connection with their team, in contrast to some who didn't... and the serious consequences.

In Part 2 the reader is introduced to *three* essential traits that connect the leader to a team, and the team members to themselves. Stallard shows how applying these elements can have energizing results and demonstrates what a "connection culture" can look like by studying historical and modern examples. In Part 3, the importance of *leading by example* is emphasized. A leader must be intentional in their desire to personally connect with others and to develop their own character. The final part of this book I found to be extraordinary because it skillfully meshes the first 3 parts into a richer context. Part 4 is intended to be read over a 20 day period. Each day a different historical leader is analyzed and the reader is shown how each leader used at least one of three elements of connection with others to achieve great things. This part of the book weaves the earlier theory, reality, logic and emotion behind connecting with others into a complete framework. The concluding chapter is an emotional call to action.

These authors have written a book that is moving, elevating and enjoyable to read! They skillfully have the ability to bring the many business and historical leaders they mention to life, and this

enriches the main concept while proving its validity. If you have the desire to become more passionate about your work, or to reignite others to become more creative and fulfilled, you need look no further than the pages of Fired up or Burned Out.

weLEAD Rating – highly recommended

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