



The Adventures of an IT Leader, Updated Edition with a New Preface by the Authors

Robert D. Austin , Shannon O'Donnell , Richard L. Nolan

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What does it take to lead and manage your company's tech?

Becoming an effective IT leader and manager presents a host of challenges—from anticipating emerging technologies, to managing relationships with senior executives, vendors, and employees, to communicating with the board. A good IT leader must also be a strong business leader.

This book—now thoroughly updated with a new preface by the authors and current tech details and terminology—invites you to accompany new CIO Jim Barton as he steps up to leadership at his company. You'll get a deeper understanding of the role of IT in your own organization as you see Jim struggle through a tough first year, handling (and fumbling) all kinds of management challenges. Although fictional, the scenarios are based on the authors' long experience working with real-life companies across industries and sectors.

The Adventures of an IT Leader is both an insightful story and an instructive guidebook. You can read it from beginning to end or treat it as a series of cases, skipping around to different chapters that address your most pressing needs. (For example, if you need to learn about crisis management and security, read chapters 10–12.) You can also test yourself and think about how to use the book's lessons in your own company by reading the authors' "Reflection" questions at the end of each chapter.

This book is your indispensable manual for IT management and leadership, no matter what business you're in.

The Adventures of an IT Leader, Updated Edition with a New Preface by the Authors Details

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Preface by the Authors Robert D. Austin , Shannon O'Donnell , Richard L. Nolan

From Reader Review The Adventures of an IT Leader, Updated Edition with a New Preface by the Authors for online ebook

Samantha Orrange says

We were required to read this for my PMBA class and it was great reading for a non-IT person. It explains textbook concepts in a story fashion, keeping you little more interested. It does occasionally talk down to the reader when explaining concepts (spelling it out a bit too much) but it works for it's purpose. Definitely meant for someone starting out, not for anyone with a background in managing IT. However it may do some good for those with purely IT knowledge or those with management knowledge but lacking the connection between the two.

Joe says

This was a really interesting book that goes through the journey of a manager who doesn't have an IT background and is thrust into the position of being a CIO. There is a lot of management principles taught, especially when dealing with IT management. Many comparisons can be made from personal experience, which is probably what makes this book so interesting. I'd say about 2/3 through the book the pace was nice, but then it changed at the last 1/3 and it felt like the authors had to get to the end of the story. There's a surprisingly good amount of snippets and vignettes for take-aways that shouldn't be ignored if you're interested in IT management.

Tom says

This is probably about as good of a general IT management awareness textbook as you could ask for, and one of the more engaging texts in my MBA program. (Not quite engaging enough to read every word--got to be a skim towards the end--but not bad.) The story format is a fun idea.

The main character seems to be written as an aspirational MBA self-insert (look how rich & successful I am, look at my high-power consultant girlfriend who I fly off to Paris with, behold the rewards mammon hath bestowed upon me for worshiping him from the depths of my soul, etc.), and that component of the book made me a little bit sad for my generation of fellow MBAs.

Franceen R says

This book was required reading for my IT business school course. What I liked about the book was that the authors made it a practical and easy read geared toward the non-tech business professionals. Many of the events within the story are realistic occurrences that the average person has experienced in their work. You come away learning to apply what the main protagonist has learned in his journey as an IT leader, into your own professional life.

Tan says

Good reference

Generic work life of IT management, but can be customised to our own company for general knowledge. After all, every company's IT issues are typically unique although it looks similar.

Adam Touhou says

If you have a lot of experience working in IT, this book is kinda boring. However if you are not affiliated with IT in any way and want a semi-boring story then this is a decent book for you.

I would not read this book again, but not a complete waste of time :-)

Greg Scott says

I want to give this book 5 stars. The story held my interest and I know first-hand how difficult it is to write a business book that keeps readers' interest.

I like the premise of Jim Barton, with no IT experience, thrown into managing an unfamiliar IT Department. One reviewer said only IT pros should manage IT Departments and compared it to somebody with no finance background acting as a CFO. I've made the exact same argument - a CIO with no knowledge about IT could be a recipe for disaster.

But this book makes a persuasive case that an appreciation of IT might be even more important than knowledge about IT. Perhaps the important factor isn't a lifetime of IT experience. Maybe wisdom and a willingness to listen, learn, build a good team, and evaluate fact from fiction are what makes a good CIO. Or a good CFO. Or a good CEO. After all, CIOs don't usually configure routers or write code or place servers into production or take help desk calls. Perhaps appreciating those skill sets is more important than possessing them. Jim Barton is a smart manager with a good team. He starts out shaky, but learns quickly about not knowing what he doesn't know and he grows into the position. The story works.

But I can't give this book 5 stars. It has problems. Some of the scenarios Barton faces are too contrived and some are unrealistic. And the proposed solution to a possible security event - shut down the whole company for a week and rebuild everything from backups? No way. Doesn't make sense. And doesn't solve the problem.

Don't get me wrong - the concerns using that event as a vehicle are real. And it's a good premise. But if there's a database problem, go through the database and fix it. IT pros in the real world do this every day. The problem could be a hardware glitch or a bunch of other factors. Security breaches are real, as we've all seen from recent headlines, but assuming a security breach because of every unexplained problem is not justified. This company is a Microsoft shop - the problem could have just as easily been a bad patch from a Windows Update. How many times have we seen those mess up systems?

My jaw dropped when the new CIO recommended to the new CEO to shut down the whole company for a

week while they rebuild everything from backups. Nobody in their right mind would recommend or do that. It just didn't make sense.

My other problem with the book was the HR issue. Several months into Barton's tenure, a subordinate manager asks Barton's advice on retaining a valuable employee. That part makes sense and the chapter presents the right issues and tradeoffs. But what doesn't make sense is, Barton had never heard of this employee and didn't know anything about the retention issue until the subordinate manager talked to him. What?!? You're running the department of a few dozen people and you don't know who the people are? Doesn't work. Barton is too smart of a manager for that.

So that's why 4 stars instead of 5 stars. It's a good book. If a subsequent edition comes out and fixes those problems, it could be a great book.

- Greg Scott

Andrew says

Some good parts- some bad. The third quarter of the book reads in a more contrived manner than the rest.

Allyson says

What an awesome "textbook"! Reading for an IT class about project management, this book has textbook elements and points that we discuss in class, but it can be called a novel. I especially like how there weren't any characters that were just plopped in the story. This was my biggest fear for the character "the kid". Great Job!

Gustav Bertram says

Interesting read, but not as good as The Phoenix Project, and not nearly as good as The Goal.

Pallavi M. says

Painfully read through this book for my Master's class...but it did impart some significant tidbits of wisdom.

Robin Ziko says

I enjoyed it. The storytelling aspect made the topics very palatable. It doesn't read like a textbook although you are able to get the same value despite the somewhat contrived scenarios.

Jari Pirhonen says

Jim Barton, business manager, got appointed as a new CIO of the company. This is huge surprise to everybody, not least to Jim, who doesn't know IT. Book tells the tale of Jim's first year as a rookie CIO with strong business background. Book is first and foremost about management, next about IT and thirdly a good story. Jim has to tackle many issues like understanding what he doesn't know, communications to business managers, runaway projects, partner selection and the biggest test for newly appointed CIO is a security incident. The book can be recommended not only to IT managers for a fresh look how to combine IT and business, but also to business managers to better understand challenges and opportunities of IT.

Amit says

Great read into a CIO's journey and issues they face.

Bob Wasserman says

Very, very good book on IT management. If you've been an IT leader for any length of time these challenges and conversations will certainly ring true. A very easy read that effectively gets across important concepts without it feeling like a text book. Interesting to me that even as we craft a (*spoiler alert*) "happy ending" for our IT hero it made me notice that he hadn't done any planning for his replacement. After all that hard work to build the team and a plan and gets thing on a positive course - OK, leave to better your career and take a wonderful opportunity but what about all the people who put out for you in the old job, eh?

Having said that - whether you're a new or experience IT leader or ESPECIALLY if you're a business manager put in charge of IT (not uncommon by any stretch) - this book is a great primer for the unique challenges oft-maligned, underappreciated IT team.
