

“NOT ALL READERS ARE LEADERS, BUT ALL LEADERS ARE READERS.”

Harry S. Truman

In a recent Sockwell Partners newsletter, we presented our thoughts on the book, [Sizing People Up](#), by Robin Dreeke. So many of you responded with your own book recommendations that we will be sharing them over several months going forward. Please keep your testimonials coming. We would love to hear what you are reading now.

At Sockwell, we have seen a pickup in engagements as 2021 gets off to a good start; there is pent-up demand from pandemic-laced 2020. Nobody is completely back to normal yet, but we are optimistic that the worst is behind us. Candidates seem more ready to look seriously at good opportunities and many clients have been receptive to remote work – at least until the need for social distancing lessens.

What are you seeing?

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Your book referrals have been both fascinating and diverse. Two of our favorites are:

**Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World -- by David Epstein**

In this 2019 *New York Times* #1 best-seller, Epstein takes issue with the popular belief that be it business, sports, science or technology, early and deep specialization is the way to go. *The Financial Times* calls his premise “a powerful argument for how to succeed in any field by developing broad interests and skills while everyone around you is rushing to specialize.” Epstein postulates that “as experts silo themselves further while computers master more of the skills once reserved for highly focused humans, people who think broadly and embrace diverse experiences and perspectives will increasingly thrive.”

*Forbes* notes that corporate hiring managers may need to rethink their practice of seeking candidates with sharply and narrowly defined skill sets. “Specialists work very, very well when addressing well-defined and well-understood problems. As ambiguity and uncertainty increase, breadth becomes increasingly important.”

For a quick overview, listen to Epstein’s **Ted Talk**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_epstein\\_why\\_specializing\\_early\\_doesn\\_t\\_always\\_mean\\_career\\_success](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_epstein_why_specializing_early_doesn_t_always_mean_career_success). You may also enjoy an earlier **Ted Talk** in which Epstein discusses his previous book, [The Sports Gene](#).

[https://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_epstein\\_are\\_athletes\\_really\\_getting\\_faster\\_better\\_stronger](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_epstein_are_athletes_really_getting_faster_better_stronger)

**Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World – by Stanley McChrystal**

In his 2015 classic, Army General (Ret.) and former Commander of Allied Special Operations in Afghanistan McChrystal details how and why he transformed a traditional command & control military culture to a distributed and collaborative one. Technology and a decentralized enemy both demanded and enabled the change.

His new emphasis on building a “shared purpose” culture and listening to those closest to the issue – no matter their rank or rate – proved far more effective than top-down authority. Sharing information meant sharing power; McChrystal had to stop trying to control everything because it was futile in battling guerilla-style Al Qaeda.

As the *Wall Street Journal* noted, we all need to sit up and take notice when a battle-worn 4-star general suggests that “nurturing an organization is more effective than trying to oversee it” and that the leadership now required is “more like gardening.”

For more information, listen to Gen. McChrystal in this Leadersin.com video interview <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iY2h3YuwNAg&t=1914s>

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Feel free to share with friends and colleagues. We welcome your feedback.

