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Review of The Connector Manager: Why Some Leaders Build Exceptional Talent--and Others Don't, by Jaime Roca & Sari Wilde

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“belongs” to the existing members. We seem similarly territorial when potential new members join a sister church instead of our church based on the work we’ve done. But what if we tore down these ecclesiastical “silos” and learned to co-elevate for kingdom growth without thought to which church reaps the harvest? Christ tells us that regardless of who does the work or what stage of the work, we should all celebrate and rejoice in that success (John 4:36)!

This book meets my hearty approval. It can benefit both local church leaders and the larger corporate body or sisterhood of churches. Within each of the rules listed by Ferrazzi, he provides practices to help fulfill these co-elevation principles. While these should be prayerfully reviewed and adapted to fit your local context, he does a fine job laying out the practices to help you get started. You will not be sorry for adding this book to your library. I’m not.

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THE CONNECTOR MANAGER: WHY SOME LEADERS BUILD EXCEPTIONAL TALENT— AND OTHERS DON’T

*By Jaime Roca and Sari Wilde
New York, NY: Penguin Random
House (2019)
Hardcover, 258 pages*

*Reviewed by WILLIAM “BILL” J.
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Authors Jaime Roca and Sari Wilde are senior leaders in the Gartner

Human Resources Research and Advisory. Gartner is a leading research and advisory company (loc. 11). As such, this book is securely positioned on a research foundation. The Garner company conducted an extensive survey research to over nine thousand employees and managers worldwide, representing eighteen different functions, working in twenty-five industries, in six different regions. The survey goal was to assess managers’ approaches to employee development and determine their impact on employee performance (loc. 12).

While each conversation was unique, they identified a theme throughout their study. They continually heard that “manager development is top priority” (loc. 12). For the sake of this book, the authors define a manager as “people who need to drive performance and get work done through others” (loc. 4). *The Connector Manager* claims that data consistently show that for the more than 160 million managers in the world today, leader development is a key element of their job.

What separates the premise of this book from others is the staggering amount of research that went into forming the conclusions. This extensive research adds credence and changes the thesis from an opinion to an evidence-based finding.

The world of the manager is rapidly transforming, and managers continually need more tools to succeed. Managers claim to “need more upskilling and need to be able to work faster,” and 70% say they “haven’t mastered the skills they need for their current jobs” (loc. 7). When surveyed, senior executives say their managers should be coaching 30% of their time, but reality shows managers coach only about 10% of their day (loc. 9). The problem

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is that managers simply don't have what they need to succeed today; they are expected to be everything to everyone. Companies respond by launching continuous coaching and feedback initiatives, requiring managers to ongoing development to all their employees. But these programs are not achieving their desired outcomes (loc. xi). Managers are overwhelmed and simply not in a position to continuously coach their employees efficiently. The thesis of *The Connector Manager* is the claim to have found a better way to manage—a way that develops and improves productivity simultaneously. The book promises to provide managers with a new and improved roadmap for coaching and developing employees. "*The Connector Manager* approach offers a more enlightened option. It provides the essential coaching and development that employers need, while also providing relief for managers stretched thin and searching for something better" (loc. xi).

The authors came to several conclusions after surveying 7,000 employees. The eighty-nine identified manager behaviors can be broadly categorized into four different managerial types, each producing a different impact on employee performance. Every manager, at any level, falls into one of the four distinct profiles (loc. 13): Teacher, Always On, Cheerleaders, and Connector Manager styles. All four profiles are populated in almost equal measured fourths. This is regardless of industries, geographies, workplace, and demographics such as generations (loc. 14).

The "Teacher" develops employees through personal expertise and experience, advising-oriented feedback, and direct employee development. The "Always On" manager provides continuous, frequent coaching,

drives employees' development and gives feedback across a breadth of skills. The "Connector Manager" introduces employees to other people for coaching and development and creates a positive team environment while providing targeted feedback. The "Cheerleader" takes a hands-off approach to development, empowering positive feedback and enabling employees to take development into their own hands.

While most managers interviewed had a strong opinion that the Always On management would yield the greatest results, this style proved the least effective of all four styles. The Always On Manager was actually shown to detract from employees performance by up to 8% (loc. 23). The Teacher and Cheerleaders improved performance by 7 and 9%, respectively. The clear performance winner was the Connector Manager, which improved employee performance by an astounding 26% (loc. 24). The Connector Manager produces the greatest results at all three corporate levels: employee (loc. 87–118), team (loc. 119–148), and organization (loc. 149–171).

Another deliverable in the book was the excellent tools found in the three appendixes. These serve as assessment tools, skill-building, and review notes on becoming a more effective Connector Manager. Especially helpful is the self-assessment survey that identifies your primary leadership style (loc. 216–223). Additionally, the assessment, training, and help tools compiled in the back of the book (loc. 210–239) are very useful tools, recaps, resources, and surveys to help improve the leader's ability to adopt the more effective Connector Manager style.

One criticism of the book might be in the title itself: *The Connector Manager*. If you are a senior leader

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looking for a book to sharpen your skills, you may very well pass this book over, believing it to be a basic entry-level management book. The text, in fact, is a wonderful and inclusive leadership study that looks at managers as people who improves outcomes through the efforts of others; this is leadership at its core.

An additional failing of the book was that it delves into great detail on only two of the four management styles. It invests a lot of time in debunking the Always On manager style. This is, perhaps, because their research showed a clear preference in leaders' opinion that this is the most effective style. But the Always On and Connected Manager are only two styles and only address half of the leaders and readers. (This is because their own research shows that all four styles are statistically equally proportioned throughout the leaders in the world.) Also, as people tend to stick with what comes naturally, the book would have to share each profile's weakness to build a case to change. However, it only discussed the shortcoming of the Always On Manager, leaving the Teacher and Cheerleader adrift on how these profiles fail in performance.

I enjoyed the fast-paced writing style that incorporated impressive research and added credibility to the book's ideas. It also used pertinent illustrations that captivated my attention, as well as business examples that engaged my thinking and aptly supported the point being highlighting.

This book's thesis and research are well supported by other modern advancements in leadership theory and studies. The relational model of the Connector Manager is core to building trust, camaraderie, and teamwork. In the world of Christian Leadership, this is the coin of the realm. In pastoral ministry, either as a congregational leader or

chaplain/institutional leader, the relationship is paramount and trumps over all other managing styles. The Connector Manager cares about the well-being of the employee. S/he looks to develop people to their full ability, not just use employee human resources. This is the hallmark of the Christian leader that pairs with the Connector Manager profile. The empowerment, investment, and skill building of those around us are the work of the servant relational Christian leader and exemplify the Christian leader's character.

I found this book very well-written. Its basis on large research gave its thesis credibility. It used pertinent and poignant examples of leadership that truly highlighted its points. The assessments, self helps, resources, and appendix tools are excellent to review and improve the proficiencies of the Connector Manager. I found value on almost every page, and there was virtually no page on which I did not take a note or highlight. *The Connector Manager* was an excellent book on leadership that identifies the most effective leadership style. It agrees with modern relational and Christian leadership principles, teaching a Connected Manager style for more effective leadership and development of your employees, team, and company.

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