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Vince Thompson is on a mission to make the manager's life more meaningful. A career manager himself... Vince has lead teams in restaurants, television

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Today Vince is the principal at Middleshift, a consulting company focused on creating revenue for Internet companies by empowering those in the middle and super-serving customers. His clients include Break.com, StarStyle.com and Napster.

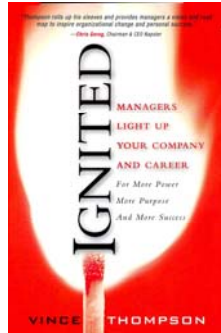
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He lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two daughters where he enjoys trail running and mountain biking. His first business book, "Ignited: Managers! Light Up Your Company and Career for More Power More Purpose and More Success" is due in stores in March of 2007 on Pearson's FT Press.

To know more about the author, go to:
<http://www.Belgnited.com>

Ignited

Managers! Light Up Your Company and Career For More Power More Purpose and More Success



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■ The Big Idea

Ignited addresses the issues of the real-world mid-level managers stuck between the needs of the corporation, the team, the colleagues, and the customers. The book highlights three important values for any manager and shows how you can attain them: more power, more purpose and more success.

By focusing on these three values, the book promises to teach how to:

- Lead in a limited space
- Know your network enough to expand it and your influence
- Manage time, powerlessness and negativity in the workplace and outside
- Implement strategic change in your company and industry
- Help you achieve your purpose
- Accomplish goals you're uniquely positioned to achieve
- Master new roles in the center of your organization
- Connect your personal passions with the goals of the company
- Sell your vision and the projects you feel most passionate about
- Live your best life, not just the company's

Why You Need This Book

Ignited talks about the important forces that exert pressure on the mid-level manager, and the strategies one needs to learn in order to reshape one's career and organization. The book does not look at success at the very top like most books, but defines success in the middle and shows that life there can just be as fulfilling and rewarding. By looking at the nuances of numerous roles in the workplace, Thompson demonstrates how managers can create the future and affect change to the people around them, putting back the heart and soul in the workplace. It gives managers in the middle real tools to make the most out of not just the workspace, but in their personal lives as well.

Living in Quake Country

Today's managers no longer live on safe, high ground. Instead, they live in "Quake Country," a place made volatile by technology, competition, innovation and constant social change. It is a place of uncertainty where people are dissatisfied with a lot of things: their personal goals do not align themselves with that of the company, turnover rates are high and fulfillment is difficult to gauge given how volatile circumstances in the workplace are. We all know there is much discontentment, and that essentially impresses a chaotic image of the modern-day workplace.

The book addresses the dilemma of today's manager who seems to be stuck in the middle. It convinces managers to seek new opportunities not only in prospective jobs and projects but also in their current work as it points out a number of reasons to stay put and look at a number of opportunities often missed by the chaos visible from the manager's perspective. Here are a few of those opportunities:

1. Demographic change as many top-level execs retire and vacancies will have to be filled out.
2. Increasing complexity of business should pose a challenge for managers to command aspects of their operations in which their skills play an important purpose.
3. Growing corporate flexibility has allowed for the destabilization of a hierarchical corporate structure, allowing middle managers to be recognized and valued for their specific contributions.
4. All these point to the reinvention of the corporate environment as old model managers have become obsolete.

Base Camp: The Ignited Quiz

The 'Ignited Quiz' is a survey-type questionnaire with ten questions. It is used as a tool to determine one's strengths as a manager to help you make the most out of this book. These questions can be simplified into the following categories:

1. Relational: How well do you know your colleagues? Who are the colleagues you rely on? Who are your mentors?
2. Attitudinal: Are you confident that your company's goals are aligned with your team's performance? How good are you as a motivator?
3. Behavioral: Do you have a personal system to make the most out of your time?

Managers with strong, sound practices will find themselves benefiting from the book by reinforcing their existing strengths. Weaker managers will find the lessons in the book valuable in improving their performance.

Part 1: Get More Power

This part offers basic tools for improving the attitudes and manner of thinking of managers in the middle. Those who have done well in the Ignited Quiz will find a lot of these principles to affirm and reinforce many of the practices they have, highlighting significant attitudinal and behavioral patterns that have been encountered in successful undertakings previously. These tools are summarized under the principles discussed below.

Action With Traction

Thompson defines action as productivity in work and traction as when efforts in the workplace make a genuine, measurable and lasting difference. For most work environments, action is often achieved through an impetus: when deadlines need to be met, when a demand has been made, when a sense of urgency needs to be responded to.

While we often give credit to our ability to rise to the occasion or to engage in action whenever necessary, it is much more important to give importance to achieving constant traction as the ultimate goal. Traction cuts deeper with every move, and allows us to carry momentum into the future. By doing so, success will be guaranteed even when there are no demands for it.

Increasing traction can be achieved in the following steps:

1. Achieve complete alignment between upper management's expectations of you and what you believe you should do. While the boss may tell you to do certain activities on a whim, it helps to examine the implicit needs of the company and to work on these implicit needs.
2. Consider the concept of 'Management Value Added' over the popular concept of 'Time Management'. By asking: "What value does management add?" Answering this question will expose very specific expectations that upper management have of you.
3. Build a portfolio of projects that stick, rather than slip. Driving the company forward means being able to identify those activities that promote gaps within the company and those projects that propel the company forward. We constantly do things without necessarily examining the consequences they bring upon us.

The Manager's Universe

This sub-part explores those volatile relationships surrounding the mid-level manager. Relationships are crucial in any business, as these relations are the most expressive of the resources available to any manager. Map your universe. Being conscious of your universe allows you to see who you can rely on, what you can ask from them and up to what extent you can rely on them.

After charting your relationships, it is easy to see what constitutes your universe at work. It will be easy to explore their importance to you, the progress you can make with them, and discover the ways you can strengthen the relationships you keep with them. It can also be beneficial in identifying which aspects of your day-to-day dealings you should focus on and which ones potentially steal energy away from you.

Leadership in Limited Space

Working in Quake Country imposes serious responsibilities on managers who need to show more resilience and fortitude in dealing with problems that people under them face as well. Dealing with the demands of a manager in this day and age calls for the following:

1. Accept the new reality. Embrace change not as a problem but as an opportunity for growth.
2. Improvise. Good managers will be able to pick up the pieces and make something brilliant out of it.

3. Stick to your beliefs and values. No matter what changes you need to address, it helps to have a clear mind and work your way towards it.

Managing Your Emotions

Nothing threatens the manager even more than allowing his or herself to be wrought by too much emotion. The powerful manager is one who can control those feelings, making sure that these do not cloud better judgment and clear thinking-- being able to switch emotional responses to counteract problems that come your way.

The Deadly Lack of Empowerment Trap

Know how to wield power. Many managers often feel powerless because they often count on the power that comes with the title bestowed to them. Empowering one's self means creating opportunities. Know your different sources of power. Thompson borrows from John French and Bertram Raven to help identify different sources of power:

1. Reward power – the perceived ability to provide positive consequences or eliminating negative ones
2. Coercive power – the ability to punish those who do not conform with your ideas or demands
3. Legitimate power – based on the perception of one's right or capability to prescribe behavior due to election or appointment by peers
4. Referent power – based on one's connections with real people who possess power
5. Expert power – based on having distinctive knowledge, expertise, ability or skills
6. Information power – based on how well you control the information needed by others to reach a goal

Maximize these different means of utilizing power and create opportunities for yourself. However, wield power with caution. Power should come with a righteous collective purpose, not to make more money, satisfy your ego or annoy your enemies.

Part 2: Get More Purpose

This part explores seven Ignition Points that mid-level managers can create so that they may feel more purpose. Managers in the middle are uniquely positioned to transform corporate strategies into concrete programs that produce profits and transform visions into concrete actions. A sense of purpose is important for them to make more informed decisions and increasing their stake in the company.

Ignition Point 1: The Process

Companies undergo shifting processes all the time not because of faults that can be attributed to them but because that's just how things are. Chances are, your company is undergoing some shift in their processes that you have to grab hold of. Change may not necessarily be bad as it provides opportunity for managers in the middle to delve deeply into those processes and share their intimate knowledge of the company and make it work for them better.

Realizing the importance of change processes in any company will harness the power of the Ignited Manager as it provides a unique opportunity to lay plans out, strategize and incorporate one's self in the process. Whether the process requires a shift in direction or a shift in management, the Ignited Manager will always pursue actions that will allow him or her to grab hold of opportunities early on and shape it according to his or her liking.

Ignition Point 2: The People

The Ignited Manager transmits new information through new pathways for his company. As such, an effective manager will be able to create new links with different people to make things happen, tapping knowledge that resides in the organization and making the most out of the connections that are already inherent there.

Communication is a crucial aspect of this ignition point as fresh new information is brought out constantly throughout the manager's network. While we may be constantly at the look-out for different strategies for communicating, effective managers are keen also on looking out for communication strategies that matter. At the very core of all these networks is trust. Take time to develop it and be open to questions and communications of any kind. In the end, you will be rewarded by the time and effort you have invested in building the relationships around you.

Ignition Point 3: The Message

The Ignited Manager is an effective 'translator'. He gets the message and is able to communicate this in the diverse challenges of the workplace. One of the roles

of the mid-level manager is to understand the vision coming from the top and find ways to translate that into actionable ideas that everyone in the workforce can relate to and support. As such, the manager provides valuable linkages between numerous networks in the company making sure that the message is clear and consistent throughout.

Ignition Point 4: The Landscape

The Ignited Manager is a good 'scout'. An effective manager can scout the landscape and see their business in relation to whole industry or community. Doing such requires a great deal of ability to reflect on how the company operates, and develop adaptable and flexible systems to address the environment where they exist. No company exists within a vacuum, and the wise manager always looks out for competition and opportunities from inside and out.

A key area in this ignition point is to know your customers well, to know their demands, and to be able to express these demands to formidable actions in the workplace that will translate to profit and traction. The effective manager turns his customers into partners, recognizing the importance of maintaining strong relationships with his clients.

Ignition Point 5: The Strategy

Traditional strategy is shaped in the boardroom. However, top-down strategy has proven problematic as it is unsympathetic to realities faced in the ground. More practical strategy—or 'emergent' strategy—is shaped in the front lines. The Ignited Manager participates in the strategy making processes of his company by applying hands-on knowledge of the company's real-world opportunities. Positioning the manager in the middle has never been more crucial, as he affects change in both the top and the bottom, wielding more control and purpose for his or herself.

Ignition Point 6: The Story

The Ignited Manager is able to transmit the company's story. Just as storytellers were once the moral fabric that held the community in ancient times, managers should be able to clarify and remind everyone of the company's values as new insights, innovations and improvements are being created and as new people are recruited. As such, an effective manager knows how to listen as much as he recites those stories. He can recount the experiences of his mentors and translate these into practical actions for his team. The same stories are also motivating and inspiring. They show a sense of continuity, tradition and a sense of purpose for everyone who listens to them.

Ignition Point 7: The Spirit

The Ignited Manager functions as a 'healer' as well. While they may recognize the technical and operative aspects of business decisions, they also understand the emotional, psychological and spiritual side of the different changes affecting the growth and development of the company. Rather than treating people like nuts and bolts in the machinery of day-to-day operations, the Ignited Manager recognizes the struggles and aspirations of everyone concerned, knows when to motivate them and make the most of the company's emotional climate to make wise and guided decisions.

Part 3: Get More Success

In this chapter, you'll discover a system of getting your ideas sold and ensuring that you achieve the success and recognition you deserve.

Selling From the Fulcrum

The Ignited Manager is skilled at selling new ideas in order to create change. He invigorates points of view, offering upper management the perspective of the ones from below, and the employees the vision from the top.

Examine your motives. When you apply yourself to solving the problems affecting the company, you could be operating at the highest level available to you.

Examining your motives will help you identify, understand and address particular problems affecting the operations of your company, making more sustainable choices in the process. To act out of selfish interests can be problematic, as it will cloud your judgment and hurt you and the people you work for in the long run.

When you are convinced of your motives and you are in the process of pushing for new ideas to enable change, think of the following:

1. Think of traction. What choices lead to genuine, measurable and lasting differences for you and your company?
2. Identify the people who will be more sympathetic to you and sell your ideas to them. Not only are you giving them the ammunition to support you, their advice and opinions will be valuable to effect the changes you need to make.
3. Approach possible detractors. Tell them about your proposal and communicate the advantages of implementing the changes you want. Seek their approval, but also accept the possibility of finding opposition.

4. When the problem is clear, give people an opportunity to participate in the solution. Make everyone participate in the process of problem-solving so that everyone feels committed to the company and to the process.

Your Own Sense of Balance

Finally, the Ignited Manager's greatest strength is achieving a sense of balance in both work and personal life. While we are often distracted by dream jobs, the reality remains that there are bills to pay and people depend on us—both at work and at home—to create an environment where both the ideals and the practicality of day-to-day living find a healthy balance. Consider Thompson's Five-Step Program:

1. Know what your goal is. While there is no right answer to this, defining a goal leads to a balanced life.
2. Develop a plan for reaching your goal. Think realistically, if you measure the resources available to you in a workplace to assess if a course of action is practical or not, so should you in your personal life.
3. Develop a scale of measurement that is yours alone. Own your success, measure it according to your standards and not on anyone else's.
4. Create and work with your personal board of directors. Know whom you trust in and out of work. Talk to them, ask for advice, listen, and discern.
5. Take care of yourself as needed to stay on track. Keep yourself healthy and happy. Exercise, pursue your hobbies, and spend time with friends and loved ones. Make sure that your schedule isn't filled only by work responsibilities.