

## Book Review

### THE 48 LAWS OF POWER

**Robert Greene, Joost Elffers, Profile Books Ltd., UK,  
1st South Asian Edition 1999, Reprint 2004, Page: 452, Rs.395/-**

As the study of management has evolved over the better half of the Two Centuries seldom have efforts been made to enrich the body of knowledge at the disposal of the practioners of this art with the greatest school of all times that human race is bequeathed with – “History”. The most compelling attribute of history to management thinkers has always been that it is always continuous, growing and usually fairly objective. This book “The 48 Laws of Power” belongs to a rare genre of contemporary management thought that is thoroughly researched, essentially original and draws from facts that most of us have been witness to or educated about. It does a surprisingly good job of picking up the threads distributed across 5 centuries and then present them as a collection of Case Studies which will be a difficult act to match.

The central theme of the book is Power and how it has shaped the world that we live in today. It provides a very candid mirror image of what exists in corporate wrangling and going-on in influential corridors the world over today.

Well researched, narrative, entertaining and instructive, The 48 Laws of Power, written by Robert Greene and designed by Joost Elffers, is a piercing distillation of three thousand years of the history of power. A synthesis of in-depth research into the philosophies of such great thinkers such as Machiavelli, Chanakya, Sun Tzu, and Carl von Calusewitz and the legacies of statesmen, and leaders through out the ages. This book is an authoritative study of power and the essential input to modern management.

In a bold and elegant text, laid out in black and red and replete with fables and unique word sculptures, the laws are illustrated through the tactics, triumphs, and failures of such figures as the shrewd Queen Elizabeth – I, the statesman Henry Kissinger, the showman P.T. Barnum, and many other who have wielded or been victimized by power. The laws teach the need for prudence (*Law:1 Never Outshine the master*), the virtue of stealth (*Law 3: Conceal Your Intentions*), the power of influence (*Law 43: Work through the heart and minds of others*). Each requires discipline (*Law 48: Assume Formlessness*), and many demand the rational to overpower all other instincts (*Law 40:Despite the Free Lunch*), All of the 48 laws provide an understanding of the strategies used by others, the tactics to avoid or live by.

The books effectively brings home the distinction of how some play with power and lose it all by a fatal mistake, some go too far and not far enough. And yet others make all the right moves and are able to draw power unto themselves with an almost superhuman dexterity. Throughout the ages, writers and philosophers have asked themselves: What are the lessons to be learnt from the success or failures of our predecessors ? Although the various writing on power span a period of more than three thousand years, common threads and themes are often repeated, ones that hint at an essence of power and suggest properties that regulate its increase and decrease. The 48 laws describes here are timeless and definitive.

At work, in relationships, on the street, on the 9 o'clock news: These laws apply everywhere. Whether your interest is conquest, self defense, or simply being an educated spectator. The 48 Laws of Power is a very useful and entertaining book and you would find it a very interesting reading.

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