Managerial Lives

Organizations are often complex and unwieldy, and many managers have difficulty in combining ideals and positive identities with the complexities and imperfections of life. They are expected to be strategic and competent, while at the same time human and empathetic. This engaging book takes a fresh look at managerial work as experienced and understood by managers. It examines the central tenets of managerial life, such as the work expectations that managers have, the significance they assign to different activities and the difficulties that they face. It also takes a wider view of working life by looking at subordination in the managerial context. The theoretical material is supported by in-depth interviews with a number of managers from different organizations. This book will appeal to those with an interest in management, and leadership and identity questions in modern working life.

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Managerial Lives
Leadership and Identity in an Imperfect World

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Contents

List of figures  page vii
List of tables viii
Preface ix

PART I MANAGERIAL LIFE: MANAGERIAL WORK
AND THE MANAGERIAL IDENTITY 1

1 Introduction 3

2 Management: work, identity and leadership 24

PART II MANAGERIAL LIFE: ROLES AND
IDENTITIES 65

3 Why management? 67

4 The manager as change agent, strategist and
networker 99

5 The manager as humanist and moral example 126

PART III MANAGEMENT: IRONIES, LABYRINTHS
AND PITFALLS 157

6 Self-view and managerial ideals meet reality:
managerial work in practice 159

7 Feedback, ignorance and self-esteem: the ironic
elements of managerial life 199
vi CONTENTS

8 Managerial life and forms of identity work 241
9 Leadership and identity in an imperfect world 279

A final word 331
Appendix: our method 334
References 339
Index 349
Figures

9.1 Anxiety positions  page 313
9.2 Anxiety strength  317
Tables

2.1 Mintzberg’s (1973) ten managerial roles page 31
8.1 Identity outcome in identity work 266
Preface

This book is the result of a number of studies of managerial work, identity and organization which we have conducted over more than a decade as members of the organization studies group at the Department of Business Administration at Lund University. Our main purpose is to examine essential elements of modern working and organizational life at close quarters. This has been done through in-depth studies of a number of people who work as middle or senior managers. Our aim is to understand the typical relationships between experience, work situation and identity in an organizational context. In doing so, we attempt to highlight how organizations and occupational groups work. We address the dilemmas and problems which lie beyond the impression given by more formal and official descriptions.

Organizations are often complex and unwieldy, and many occupational groups and managers have difficulty successfully combining ideals and positive identities with the complexities and imperfections of life. Modern-day working life is, in many ways, contradictory and complicated – what seem like good ideals and clear recipes for success can easily cause deadlock and become traps for managers.

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