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LEADING GEEKS: How to Manage and Lead People Who Deliver Technology

PAUL GLEN. *Jossey-Bass*, \$26.95 (256p)
ISBN 0-7879-6148-5

Technology has so clearly woven itself into the fabric of business culture that publishing Glen's book on how to manage the people who produce high tech makes perfect sense. The author, founder of a consulting firm specializing in IT organizations, assumes that "geeks" are not everyday people, and draws on his experience to present clear and simple techniques for employers to not just get what they need out of tech workers but to become the kind of managers who will mesh well with this new kind of employee. Glen's insight is to treat high technology as a creative product produced by temperamental people who are a cross between artists and professionals. This view stems from the ambiguity of "geekwork" and the fact that geeks usually know more about what they do than do their managers. Though Glen doesn't advocate turning the factories over to the workers, his aim is to make managers more effective by teaching them about the people they lead, not by giving them tools to bend employees to their will. He does an excellent job of enumerating geek characteristics and the context in which geekwork takes place, providing ample material on what works with geeks and what doesn't, such as "intrinsic" or "extrinsic" motivators, and valuable advice, like "never underestimate the power of free food." Though it doesn't contain much new material, Glen's easily readable book will prove exceptionally useful for managers who feel left behind by the pace of technology or bosses seeking to better understand their information age employees. (Nov.)