



# The Productive Narcissist: The Promise and Peril of Visionary Leadership

*Michael Maccoby*

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## **The Productive Narcissist: The Promise and Peril of Visionary Leadership** Michael Maccoby

A provocative examination of the essential – and widely misunderstood--personality type of today's most innovative leaders.

What is it that Oprah Winfrey, Jack Welch, Martha Stewart, and Bill Gates all have in common? According to psychoanalyst, anthropologist, and consultant Michael Maccoby, it's not just enormous success and celebrity – it's narcissism. In *The Productive Narcissist*, Maccoby proposes a new paradigm of modern leadership and zeros in on one common character trait: the narcissistic personality. Challenging prevailing leadership theories, Maccoby argues that today's most innovative leaders are not consensus-building bureaucrats; they are “productive narcissists” with the interrelated set of skills -- foresight, systems thinking, visioning, motivating, and partnering – that he terms “strategic intelligence.” Rejecting the negative stereotype of the individual who is destroyed by a pathological preoccupation with himself, Maccoby redefines the productive narcissist as the personality type who is best suited to lead during times of rapid social and economic change. At the same time, he makes clear that narcissistic leadership doesn't always mean successful leadership and that narcissists lacking strategic intelligence are fated to crash and burn.

Beginning with an examination of the crucial role personality plays in the workplace and an analysis of the primary personality types (a questionnaire allowing readers to evaluate their own personalities is included), Maccoby makes an eye-opening case for how narcissism has been misunderstood and how throughout history narcissists have always emerged to inspire people and to shape the future. While narcissism can be extraordinarily useful—even necessary—for effective leadership, Maccoby shows how it also has a distinct downside when narcissists become unrealistic dreamers and harbor the illusion that only circumstances or enemies block their success. Strategic intelligence is the hallmark of the productive narcissist, and by elucidating its key qualities – and how they can be developed – Maccoby illuminates both what it takes for narcissists to truly succeed and how to work with them most effectively .

Based on over thirty years of first-hand experience consulting with business leaders around the world, *The Productive Narcissist* redefines the way we understand and relate to today's leaders.

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