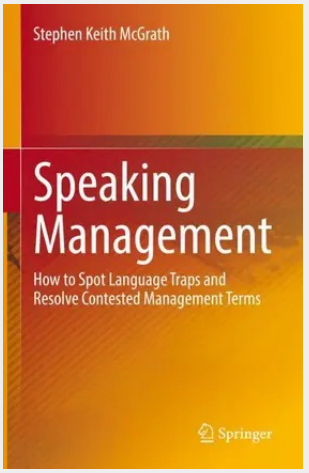
McGrath

Speaking Management

How to Spot Language Traps and Resolve Contested Management Terms



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This book identifies ten linguistic traps in our everyday language usage and provides philosophical justification for a method of determining internally consistent definitions of groups of related terms that avoid all ten traps. Various examples and applications of this method are given throughout.

The book demonstrates how the seemingly straightforward matter of our understandings of the meaning of words can have major implications for the exercise of power. This book illustrates how this insight originated from management research into project governance that found lack of agreement on the definition of that term, as well as on many other important management terms. To resolve this, the impacts of evolution, philosophy and linguistics upon our everyday language usage were investigated. The research documented in this book found that the human tool called language works well for describing physical objects but has difficulty producing a common understanding of the meaningof concepts - a problem not restricted to the management field. That field is simply a microcosm that exposes a much more widespread linguistic usage problem affecting our personal, religious and political lives; one that existed at the time of Plato and Aristotle and has laid hidden for millennia. This book includes a lexicon of 70 commonly used but confused or contested management terms, as well as a further 18 such project management terms, all developed by applying its definitional method. The terms include governance, power, ethics, leadership and their associated groups of terms. The book explores how disagreement can be resolved using these new clear definitions and extends this into an analysis of who ‘good’ ethics are good for. It also incorporates a section on “how to speak management and actually know what you are talking about”, written in the style of an ‘idiots guide’ or ‘guide for dummies’. This identifies common, everyday circumstances in which lack of agreed definitions cause avoidable confusion and provides the book’s focus on conflict dissolution rather than on conflict resolution.

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