

# TURNING PAGES

~ book reviews of interest to the aviation professional

## Leadership and Deception:

Getting out of the box

The Arbinger Institute. Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting Out of the Box. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2010. 200 pages.

Available in hardcover, softcover, Kindle, audio, and audio CD formats at [http://www.amazon.com/Leadership-Self-Deception-Getting-Out-Box/dp/1576759776#reader\\_1576759776](http://www.amazon.com/Leadership-Self-Deception-Getting-Out-Box/dp/1576759776#reader_1576759776).

A book review by CPT Mike Schreckenbach

In Leadership and Self-Deception, The Arbinger Institute conducts an introspective look at what leadership should be or rather could be when leaders place people first. The book illustrates how self-deception can lead to a limited or narrow view of a problem, referred to by The Institute as being "in the box." Once leaders are in the box, they begin to justify themselves through excuses while blaming others for their shortcomings.

performance counseling session, Tom's supervisor discusses traits that have placed him in the box. Tom is unaware of his own self-deception. His supervisor explains how self-betrayal causes our failure to see that we have deceived ourselves and, more importantly, recognize that we may be the cause of the problem. Tom's supervisor discusses a situation in which Tom overreacted to an employee's performance. As Tom realizes how he reacted and how his actions were perceived, the central argument of the book is revealed. In order to deny self-betrayal and stay out of the box, one has to view people as people and not objects. The Arbinger Institute further explains how being in the box is self-perpetuated and directly impacts the way others respond to our actions and to us. Only when we realize we are in the box can we fully comprehend that our view of reality is distorted and are unable to see others or ourselves clearly.

Leadership and Self-Deception extends The Arbinger Institute's concepts into Tom's personal life to show that they can apply to any relationship. As Tom delves deeper and deeper into the lesson, he realizes self-justification is the catalyst which has placed him in the box. Many of us can relate to this self-

perpetuating concept. We believe we are good Soldiers, good leaders, good aviators, hard workers, good fathers/mothers, etc. All of these can and are used to justify our actions when we have committed self-

betrayal. The Arbinger Institute contends, "We end up carrying these self-justifying images with us into new situations... We don't see people straightforwardly, as people. Rather, we see them in terms of the self-justifying images we've created. If people act in ways that challenge the claim made by a self-justifying image, we see them as threats." Furthermore, once we begin to self-deceive ourselves and enter the box our resulting outlook will most likely encourage others to enter the box with us. This concept identifies how our behavior and how we view others perpetuates the same reaction in them. Hence we fail to identify that we may be the cause of the "problem" and we will only continue to blame others for our own faults.

The obvious question is, how does one get "out of the box"? The Arbinger Institute explains what does not work and offers a view on the path forward that questions your virtue.

The Arbinger Institute allows latitude for a reader to interpret the concepts to his life. You can easily replace Tom's character with any Army leader or his company for any military organization. After reading Leadership and Self-Deception, the term "mission first, people always" will take on a new meaning. All Soldiers, and especially leaders at all levels could benefit from this lesson. The Arbinger Institute does a good job of expanding on "The Golden Rule" and they conclude, "The thing that divides fathers from sons, husbands from wives, neighbors from neighbors - is the same thing that divides coworkers from coworkers as well. Companies fail for the same reason families do...both are organizations of people." Leadership and Self-Deception ends with the advice that until we "get out of the box" and displace the distortions it causes, "we don't know who we work and live with."

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the book that is changing lives  
and transforming organizations

LEADERSHIP AND  
SELF-DECEPTION

getting out  
of the box

The Arbinger Institute  
Authors of *The Anatomy of Peace*

Using on the job and family life challenges we all face, The Arbinger Institute uses "Tom's" experiences as examples to guide us through Leadership and Self-Deception. In an early job

