

## How to *Zing!* Your Life & Leadership: 21 Insights on Maximizing Your Influence

By Nancy Hunter Denney

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Reviewed by

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Nancy Hunter Denney must have had fun writing *How to Zing! Your Life and Leadership*. Overall, the book was enjoyable to read and offered something for everyone. In addition to offering suggestions on how to add *Zing!* to your life and leadership, Denney included quotations from a variety of people throughout the book. Through the quotes, the reader can experience the wisdom and insight of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Winston Churchill, Ovid, Louisa May Alcott, Golda Meir, Fred Rogers, Robert Browning and others. Denney also used many personal stories throughout the book to illustrate personal growth.

So, exactly what is *Zing!*? Denney defines *Zing!* as “the ability to override competing forces to positively influence others towards a greater social good” (pg. xi). She adds that *Zing!* is charisma, which she defines as connecting to others on a variety of levels, including intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical. Denney further adds that charisma, though hard to define because of its highly personal nature, is a valuable quality and a powerful means of influencing others, achieving personal happiness, and making the world a better place.

There are several key concepts in this description, the first being influence. What can readers personally do to improve their influence with others thus improving their experiences and chances for happiness and success? “Happiness” and “success” are life concepts Denney asks readers to define for themselves. She elaborates on ways to influence others through 21 insights. The second key concept is competing forces. Denney states that these forces are both internal and external. Internal competing forces may include, but are not limited to, personal disposition, physical disability, race, illness, and language barrier, while external competing forces may include, but are not limited to, work environment, stressors in one’s life, and what one does for a living. The third key concept is charisma. Denney challenges the reader to go beyond the narrow application of charisma and strive for enhanced charisma in our lives and leadership by doing great things daily.

Now to the bigger question...how can we *Zing!* our life and leadership? How can we improve our experiences toward self-defined happiness, success, and a greater social good? Denney lays out a plan of action through 21 insights that can maximize influence

and increase one's chance at happiness and success.

These insights are: 1) the opportunity for self-inspection, 2) the content of character, 3) the power of purpose, 4) the inspiration of vision, 5) the transcending of adversity, 6) the curiosity of courage, 7) the plus of adaptability, 8) the positives of attitude, 9) the magnetism of praise, 10) the rules of respect, 11) the necessity of nourishment, 12) the draw of intelligence, 13) the example setting of determination, 14) the art of interpersonal communication, 15) the attraction of listening, 16) the pull of the podium, 17) the building of relationships, 18) the punch of humor, 19) the appeal of playfulness, 20) the gift of self-discipline, and finally, 21) the hand of humility.

*How to Zing!* fits easily into the self-help, self-examination, self-improvement category. Just as most books of this genre, *How to Zing!* suggests that readers choose the insight(s) that best fits their needs at this point in time. In addition to merely suggesting insights that can help maximize influence, Denney includes skill building lessons and exercises at the end of each chapter, making the book interactive. Skill building lessons and exercises, found in the extensive appendix, can be simple or quite involved depending on the nature of the lesson. For instance, the first exercise asks one to measure his or her personality and current *Zing!* level by completing a pretest inventory. To complete this exercise, the reader and someone else must complete the Personality of Influence Inventory and score the measure accordingly. Other exercises are as simple as answering a set of true or false questions.

The book includes numerous lists, charts, and opportunities to engage in instant self-examination before completing the skill building lessons and exercises. For instance, there is an illustrative list (obtained through surveys) of “noncharismatic behaviors” people engage in that are annoying and lower one's *Zing!*. The list includes: chews gum loudly, fails to maintain eye contact, doesn't hold the door for others, cares little about others' welfare, tells inappropriate jokes, wears noticeably unpressed clothes, and the list goes on. The question that begs for an instant answer is, “Do I do that?”

Personally, I was pleased to see that Denney addressed such *Zing!*-lowering behaviors as inappropriate cell phone use (Denney's example—hearing a lady talk about her divorce; my example—hearing a guy brag about how bad he treated his now ex-girlfriend, complete with profanity) and how college students disrespect themselves and their professors by wearing pajamas to class.

*How to Zing!* is an excellent, quick read and a very interactive book for both professionals and students who seek to enhance the quality of their lives and their experiences with others. *How to Zing!* is also a good source for those among us who seek to strive for a greater social good. Happy Zinging!